

HIGH LIFE IN FRANCE UNDER
THE REPUBLIC.



A SÉJOUR IN THE PARISIAN "GRAND MONDE."

HIGH LIFE IN FRANCE UNDER THE REPUBLIC:

SOCIAL AND SATIRICAL SKETCHES IN PARIS
AND THE PROVINCES.

BY

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FOURTH EDITION.



LONDON :

VIZETELLY & CO., 42, CATHERINE STREET, STRAND.

1888.

38163

Most of the articles contained in the present volume originally appeared in the *Pall Mall Gazette*. They have since undergone considerable revision, and are now republished by the courteous permission of the proprietor of that journal.



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HIGH LIFE IN FRANCE UNDER THE REPUBLIC.

CHAPTER I.

BLUE-BLOODS AND UPSTARTS.

MONSIEUR LE DUC DAGOBERT DE SANGBLEU is a very noble young man, who owns not less than £8,000 a year, and makes this income look much bigger by calling it two hundred thousand livres. He is "emancipated," which is the correct term for conveying that his parents have ceased to grace this earth; and he has attained his "grand majority," which means that, being five and-twenty years old, he can marry without any other formality than that of obtaining the consent of his grandfather and grandmother, or, failing such consent, of addressing to these venerable relatives three "respectful summonses" through a lawyer. All the world is aware that if at the third respectful summons the grandfather and grandmother of M. de Sangbleu declined to relent, the Duke might marry without them, which does not prove, however, that these summonses are useless, for each of them brings a fee of fifty francs to the lawyer. We may be quite certain, though, that M. de Sangbleu will never do anything without the permission of his grandfather, for he is most exemplary in his works, having been admirably trained by a reverend tutor of the Society of Jesus in all the principles of three centuries ago.

At nineteen he shed the blood of Garibaldians at Mentana, earning the Pope's blessing and the Cross of St. Sylvester; in the Franco-German war he fought under Charette on the Loire, helped to put down the Commune, and received two severe wounds, one in the leg, the other in his most cherished hopes, for he had trusted that in cutting down M. Delescluze and Co. he was aiding to restore Henri V. Subsequently M. de Sangbleu performed the pilgrimage to Lourdes, and set a fine pattern to a thankless age by carrying a lighted taper of five pounds' weight in a chanting procession. This was proper enough as no one will gainsay; but what would M. de Sangbleu's more immediate ancestors have thought, could they have walked out of their frames at the Château de Tourmoisie, and have seen their promising young descendant?

It has become a harmless fallacy to suppose that the pre-revolutionary nobles were devout Churchmen every one, and M. de Sangbleu guilelessly encourages this notion when he talks, as he often does, of the piety of his forefathers. He is fain to forget the cheerful atheism of those who actually knew Voltaire and his friends D'Alembert, Diderot, and Grimm. The three or four Ducs de Sangbleu who danced through the eighteenth century in the train of Philip of Orleans, Louis XV., Madame de Pompadour, and Madame du Barry, were men who set light store by bishops. They had known that precious Cardinal Dubois, and Cardinal Fleury, the Prime Minister who was ruled by a lady spoken of by the whole Court as "Madame la Cardinale;" then Dillon, Bishop of Evreux, who kept a hundred and fifty hunting horses in his stables and became bankrupt for ten million livres; and Cardinal Louis de Rohan again, Archbishop of Strasburg and the hero of the Necklace business; and those two serviceable Bishops of Sens and Poitiers who waited on Madame de Pompadour at her early levées, and on a certain memorable occasion knelt down, amid the tittering of pages and chamberlains, and helped her to put on her slippers.

As to the Ducs de Sangbleu of Louis XIV.'s and Louis XIII.'s

reigns, they were doubtless a trifle more devout than those who hob-nobbed with the above-named holy men ; but even in their day earnest religiousness was not deemed in very good taste at Versailles—it smacked of Molinism or Jansenism or downright Protestantism ; so that one must go back to the era of the League to find a Sangbleu who really cared much about the Faith. This mention of the Duc de Sangbleu's ancestors will show that he is an authentic nobleman of ancient lineage, which is more than many a titled Frenchman could prove, if requested to establish his right to the high-sounding appellation he is known by. It is notorious that there are upwards of a hundred thousand Frenchmen bearing titles, and more than three hundred thousand others who put themselves in the genitive case by means of the coveted prefix "*de*." Now it is well-known that his lamented Majesty Louis XIV. created Dukes by the batch and Counts by the gross ; and that Louis XV. empowered Mesdames de Mailly, de Pompadour, and du Barry—his confidential advisers—to confer Marquisesates on all who could pay fitly for those high-class dainties. Napoleon I. also raised up a crop of Dukes, Counts, and Barons, who have fructified abundantly ; but, after all, under Louis XIV. it required land to earn a title, under Louis XV. money,* and under the First Napoleon merit ; and land, money, and merit have ever been rare enough. In their turn their Majesties, the pear-headed Citizen King, and the last of the Emperors, lavishly granted titles in reward of military and political services,* but we still stand puzzled in face of such a formidable total as 101,726 titles, and 300,000 *de*'s, especially remembering the numerous wars which have drained France

* The First Napoleon created 9 Princes, 32 Dukes, 338 Counts, and 1,090 Barons. The government of the Restoration (Louis XVIII. and Charles X.), granted the necessary "patents" for 70 Dukes, 70 Marquises, 63 Counts, 62 Viscounts, and 215 Barons, besides issuing 785 "letters of simple nobility." Under Louis Philippe, France was blessed with 3 more Dukes, 19 Counts, 17 Viscounts, and 59 Barons ; and during the Second Empire the aristocratic element was still further reinforced by the creation of 12 Dukes, 19 Counts or Viscounts, and 21 Barons. In addition, 368 persons were authorised to assume the genitive prefix "*de*."

during the last two centuries, and the wholesale guillotining, shootings, and drownings of the Reign of Terror.

As a matter of fact, looking at the case literally, the authentic nobility of France, which Monsieur le Duc Dagobert de Sangbleu belongs to, reckons some 30,000 scions, whereof the majority date their origin from the Crusades, but whereof three Princes, seven Dukes, eleven Marquises, and twenty-five Counts only can prove their creations from before the 17th century. However, if any French noble object to finding himself omitted from the above roll of forty-six, he can get out of the scrape by averring that his family parchments were burned during the Revolution. A great many have so averred, and nothing was more touching than to see the number of waiting noblemen who turned up after the Revolution with the story that they were *émigrés* and had lost their letters-patent through the burning of castles which no one recollected the existence of.

These neo-magnates stood towards the nobles who had notoriously flourished before 1789 in the proportion of about five to one; and their uprising reminds one of the wondrous blossoming of Russian Princes and Counts which took place after the death of Ivan the Terrible, who wishing to abolish nobility, had ordered all his nobles to deliver up their parchments* that they might be burned. When Ivan died, his successor, Fedor, revoked* his decree, with this result, that all the sons and cousins of the Counts and Princes whose parchments had been burned, assumed the titles which belonged to the heads of their families; and it is from this date that the practice of titling all the sons and grandsons of Russian Princes and Counts took root. In like manner, it was after the Revolution that younger sons in France began affectionately to usurp the titles of their elders. Formerly the younger sons of all nobles below the rank of Duke bore—save under exceptional patent—the style of “Chevalier;” but in the present century we have seen Marquises of “elder branch,” “younger branch,” and “cross branch,” with coats-of-arms and fantastic quarterings which would make any herald weep.

"That's what comes of equality!" remarked Louis XVIII. drily, when the Duc de Richelieu gently broke to him that there were somehow five or six times more nobles in the country than there had been before his Majesty fled to Coblenz; and he added "Il faudra aviser." But on second thoughts, it was decided not to "aviser," for the restored Bourbons were in sore need of friends, and as all the self-dubbed nobles called themselves keen Legitimists, and were many of them wealthy folk, it was thought imprudent to anger them. As for what occurred under Louis Philippe we have only to glance at M. Guizot's Memoirs to learn how every enriched merchant bravely usurped the title of the estate he had purchased; the King complacently winking at these usurpations in order to swamp the true nobility who were hostile to him.

Napoleon III. at first tried to cope with this custom which had become an established usage by the time he seized on the throne, but he, too, was in need of friends, and it would not have been worth his while to inquire minutely into the pedigrees of influential landholders. Besides, *le pli était pris*, as the French gracefully say. It had grown into a tradition that certain posts—especially those in the diplomatic service, the prefectural hierarchy, the army staff, and the higher commands in the navy—could not be filled with proper prestige unless the titulant were a nobleman; so that the Emperor, in his turn, took to creating Dukes and Counts, Viscounts, and Barons, whilst self-ennoblings were conducted on a grander scale than ever.

Well may M. de Sangbleu and his friends, the authentic nobles, bewail the comparative facility of these usurpations. But, after all, what was to prevent M. Duval, born in or owning a piece of land near the village of Faublason, from describing himself on his address cards as "Duval (de Faublason)" to distinguish himself from the Duvals in other parts of the country? Duval is a common name, and even government officials might be pleased to know that they were talking to the Duval who came from Faublason, and not with the Duval from Faumanoir or the one

from Fautoupet, both prominent men likewise. Moreover, the fact that "de Faublason" was printed in parentheses, prevented its being an usurpation.

But eventually a day came when Duval, having prospered in his affairs, obtained the Legion of Honour, or secured some post under Government, or was elected Councillor-General in his Department, or Mayor in his Commune, in any of which events his name had to figure in the *Officiel*. Then was the time when Duval, grown glorious, first dropped the parentheses and got himself without difficulty gazetted as Duval de Faublason, for though certificates of birth are required for small clerkships, a man who attains higher honours may have himself printed by what name he chooses. A nomination in the *Officiel* is, however, equivalent to a registered deed, so that from the day when Duval was gazetted as Faublason he might sign himself by that name thenceforth and defy mankind. The mayor of his town might object that as Faublason's fathers were Duvals, he himself ought to sign Duval in documents to be legalised; but if the mayor wished to enforce his objection, he would have to appeal to the Ministry of Justice, and he was not likely to do this for the mere pleasure of quarrelling with a man who was prosperous and on good terms with the higher powers.

Thus M. Duval and men of similar ambition contrived to assume aristocratic names, and ere long, either at their wife's instigation, or pushed by their own vanity, many of them donned coronets of various ranks. If they rose high in finance, they called themselves Barons, if they were returned deputies, they be-Count-ed themselves, and if they entered the diplomatic service, nothing less than Marquisates satisfied them. After this nothing more was required but that their children should look down proudly upon the lesser race of men, and talk of their ancestral allegiance to the Bourbons and the white flag—facts which they were in the habit of performing so conscientiously as to hoax even themselves into the belief that the impious Revolution of 1789 inflicted an ineffaceable wrong on their progenitors. From nobles of this

stamp the Duc Dagobert de Sangblen keeps aloof, that is, as far as practicable, for your upstart patrician is often gifted with sufficient power of intrigue to edge his way into good society.

M. de Sangblen, as becomes a *gentilhomme* of his ancient lineage, is extremely dignified. His shirt-collars are stiffer than those of any other young man of his age; his studs and sleeve-links are emblazoned with lilies, and he wears a tuft on his chin (not an *impériale*, but a *royale*—there is a vital difference of half an inch between the two) because the late lamented Louis XIV. did so. You have only to glance at M. de Sangblen as he stands smoking his pink, after-dinner cigarette in the dining-room of his mansion in the Champs Elysées—where he lives for the cogent reason that his ancestral residence in the Faubourg St. Germain was burned down by the Communists—to guess that here is a young magnate who could never have been taught Euclid by demonstration, but only by a process of courteous affirmatives. Thus his tutor could never have said to him, “Monsieur le Duc, I will prove to you that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles.” He would have said: “Monsieur le Duc, I give you my word of honour that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles;” and to this young M. de Sangblen would have nobly answered, “I cannot see, sir, that anything is impossible to a man of courage who invokes the aid of Providence; but the moment you pledge your honour to this fact that is sufficient.” Happy they who in these unholy times can thus subordinate the material sophistries of logic to the higher dictates of the soul!

But devout and dignified as the Duke may be, he is not averse to pleasure; and indeed, the Parisian season having just commenced, he has come to the capital to spend his winter in fashionable but not reckless amusement. This very evening he proposes attending a reception given by one of the leaders of the Royalist party, and as it is already nine o'clock, he throws down his pink cigarette and prepares for departure.

A two-horse brougham with its lamps aglow grates on the gravel sweep outside; the house-door opens, a major-domo steps

down with a fur rug followed by a groom with a carpeted hot-water can, and in another minute M. de Sangbleu himself emerges, grandly swathed in a cloak of black Russian fox-skin. He ensconces himself on the springy blue cushions of the carriage, the hot water apparatus is pushed under his feet, and the footman scrambles on to the box, and gives the coachman the address.

The Duke's horses are fleet and his brougham is a miracle of lightness, such as only a French coachmaker could devise. Dark blue panels, with not an ounce of brass or loud colour about them—for even the door-handles are of black leather, and the coroneted 'scutcheon is painted of a blue but one shade fainter than the ground—then, light springs, clean whisking wheels, and a compact box, so that there is not a fault to be found with the turn-out—save perhaps that the French footman is uncommonly small, and the English coachman of life-guard size, which makes the pair look like a comma and a point of exclamation side by side—but then “nothing here below is perfect.”

If any exception were to be made to that familiar axiom, it would assuredly be in favour of M. de Sangbleu's evening attire. The English, it may be granted, know best how to dress in the daytime, but Frenchmen decidedly shoot ahead of them in the night season. A tasteful Frenchman's dress-coat is a whole symphony in cloth. It has no creases or twists, no discord in its universal harmony; and the little slip of red ribbon which knights like M. de Sangbleu are privileged to wear for their war deeds, shows better on it than an eighteen-pennyworth of flowers. Then when a Frenchman boasts £8,000 a year, and knows that all the ladies in the room—especially the unmarried ones—are alive to the fact and deeply appreciate it, he soars above the earth in that dress-coat of his, and becomes semi-godlike—bright, fascinating, a fountain of small-talk.

The Royalist reception is at its height, when M. de Sangbleu's name is announced; and now watch the entrance of this polished young Frenchman into the drawing-room, his unembarrassed gait, and perfect manner of bowing. Bowing is mentioned advisedly,

for at the entertainments of the *grand monde* graceless finger-grasping which converts a gallant man's arm into a pump-handle is happily dispensed with. There is no flapping of words in a French drawing-room, for guests of one host are supposed all to know one another and to be sociable without introductions. So when M. de Sangbleu has saluted his host and hostess, and inveighed during five minutes against the doctrines of material philosophy in company with a prelate, who speaks like a well-bound missal, he glides among a troop of bravely garrulous politicians, from among whom he slips in due time, much refreshed, into a vortex of ladies, where he is detained, made much of, and declared the paragon of young men. So much so, in truth, that when the reception is over, one weighty Royalist personage says to another, "That young Duc de Sangbleu would be just the man to contest his Department against the Republican candidate, at the next election."

"Yes," answers the other, "and I'll write to our friends about it. Sangbleu is one of those iron youths of old France who are phenomena in these degenerate days. He won't reach his home till two, yet he will be out at ten to-morrow with the Chantilly hounds."

CHAPTER II.

THE CHANTILLY HOUNDS.

PARIS is a habitable place from four in the afternoon until the same hour past midnight, but it provides no amusement for one's mornings. A man cannot ride in the Bois at midday, for he would ride in solitude ; he cannot play at the old national game of tennis, for public *jeux de paume* have ceased to exist ; as for cricket, rackets, football, and polo, no true Frenchman of these days will ever take kindly to such sports, which blister the hand and bruise the shin-bone. Nevertheless, to Frenchmen who have passed their youth in the country, deriving periodical excitement from a day's march after a brace of partridges, or from a hunt after a wolf, escorted by all the rabble doggery of their estates, Parisian mornings are apt to seem dull. Hardy Franks of this sort do not care to imitate the *petits crevés* of the Second Empire who remained in bed till twelve, breakfasted till two, smoked till four, and turned into the Bois at five looking healthy as wafers. They want movement for their generous blood, bracing for their strong nerves ; and it was an unmixed blessing to them when his Royal Highness the Duc d'Aumale returned from exile and started the Chantilly staghounds.

Of course the Duc Dagobert de Sangbleu is a member of the Chantilly Hunt and so is his intimate friend, M. Pistache. Every Duke with 200,000 livres a year must have about him a M. Pistache, who is not a dependant though, for he has a fine income of 20,000 livres all his own, but a deferential admirer, sworn associate and henchman, having all the fidelity, tact, and good-

humour of a true poodle. M. de Sangbleu is Royalist and Catholic to his heart's core, but quietly so ; M. Pistache feels bound to give tongue about his Legitimist opinions whenever he has the chance—else what is the use of opinions ? M. de Sangbleu, again, is ready to admit that in these sorry times one must make certain concessions to popular prejudices ; but M. Pistache, being descended from a glorious family of wig-makers, protests against all concessions, and will never sleep happy till his friend Sangbleu is restored to the full exercise of feudal prerogatives. Such zeal goes not unrewarded, and the Duke, frequently patting his worshipper's shoulder, exclaims, "Ce brave Pistache !"

Now behold the brave Pistache and his Duke both rolling together in the latter's brougham at 8.30 a.m. towards the Northern Railway, *en route* for Chantilly. They are arrayed in scarlet, with buckskins, boots, hunting whips, and white gloves, but they do not look like English fox-hunters, for this is what happened one day at M. de Sangbleu's tailor's. When the Duke had ordered his complete hunting suit *à l'Anglaise*, the tailor rubbed his head and said, "Why *à l'Anglaise*, Monsieur le Duc ? The English put on a red coat and cover their heads with a chimney-pot, which is heresy. Why not the skirted coat *à la Française*, the three-cornered hat, gilt-handled dirk, and yellow buckskins, all of which look striking and are cavalier-like ?" There was no gainsaying this, so M. de Sangbleu and M. Pistache each wear a short cutlass round their middle and a fluffy border of white plumes above the gold lace of their head-dresses. The other cavaliers or sportsmen whom we find at the Northern Railway encumbering the waiting-rooms are like them, and a grand show they make accosting one another with inquiries about the wind and hobnobbing the cups of their silver flasks for luck's sake.

The muster does not seem to excite much attention from ordinary passengers, for the Chantilly meets are frequent, and everybody—including the station porters—has got accustomed to them. Only when a couple of pretty Amazons appear wearing

the three-cornered hat like the gentlemen and three rows of the Chantilly "button" on their habits—only then is there a slight surge of curiosity from humdrum folk taking tickets for Picardy. But the Amazons quickly flit by trooped after by their flock of attendant cavaliers, and the glass doors of the waiting-room close behind them.

Another minute and the opposite doors leading to the platform slip back in their grooves, the whole scarlet flood breaks forth precipitously as if the stag were already in sight, and each valiant sportsman tries to scramble into the saloons of the special train, or to assist the ladies to mount therein without getting his dirk between his legs. There is always hurry in the movements of Frenchmen, but it is a genial hurry, full of smiles, cigar-smoke, and mutual courtesy. Settled in their saloons, all the men start up, crane their heads out of the windows in couples, and wonder why the train does not start. When it does start they say "Ah!" and blame the administration in a chorus for being always behindhand; then fall to pronouncing English sporting terms like merry but weak-toothed people cracking nuts. This is indispensable on such occasions, and that Frenchman earns admiration who can produce a London paper and read out the sporting quotations in the vernacular, or who, like M. de Sangbleu, can fasten upon an Englishman from the British Embassy and keep up an easy conversation beginning with the classic phrase, "He makes finer this morning than yesterday, sir."

M. Pistache does not speak English, and is fain to follow his friend's exploits without sharing them. Once upon a time he did visit Britain, and even hoped to master the language of the natives; but it is painful to state that he fell in with a school-boy who hoaxed him as to the conjugation of the verbs. Said this boy: "The verb *to go* is the easiest of all, Mossoo:—I go, you dance, he walks; we run, you hook it, they bolt." Now, M. Pistaché, having found difficulties enough in his French verbs, decided he would not worry himself further with a language so constructed.

Chantilly was the house of the Condés, and of that much more popular man, the cook Vatel ; and where is the French sportsman who is not proud of its giant stables for two hundred horses, its matchless racecourse, and model pack ? But the place is more or less an English colony peopled with a bandy-legged race of grooms, rough riders, and budding jockeys, a very cavalcade of whom are drawn up outside the station waiting for the Paris train. M. de Sangblen, like most members of the hunt, baits his hunters by private arrangement at the Duc d'Aumale's, and his steed is a black one, sixteen hands high, with no fault but the very French one of rushing at a puddle as if it were a fence and at a fence as if it were a puddle. M. Pistache, having loftier views in all things, climbs upon a roan a hand and a half taller than the Duke's—though it is also M. de Sangblen's property—and this animal cannons against half a dozen other horses at starting, kicks at a dog, and ambles off sideways over three miles of road, M. Pistache being utterly unable to put him straight till he reins him in at the meet, which is the "Stone Table"—a sort of rock-slab in mid-forest.

Some sixty horsemen soon assemble here, with the Duc d'Aumale and the Duc de Nemours in their midst—the former straight and iron-like, as if he sniffed Bedouins in the wind ; the latter an exact copy of Henri IV. exhumed from St. Denis for a day's sport. As a matter of course M. Quiclet, "captain of the hunt," and the aged Hourvari, the renowned head *piqueur*, are also in attendance. There is a great deal of tooting on French horns, for anything like true sport would be impossible without it ; and the thirty couples of stag-hounds held together in leashes of six by blue-and-silver liveried under *piqueurs*, who slope backwards at an angle of forty-five in their efforts to restrain them, bark, yelp, and tug in a manner that is quite exhilarating. So, at least, thinks M. Pistache, who cannot understand, however, why these dogs should not be allowed to have their own way.

He is recalled to the merits of the question by a huntsman, who, galloping athwart everybody, rends the atmosphere right in

twain with the braying of his horn—his mode of conveying that the stag was uncarthed ten minutes ago, and, that “law” being up, it is time to loose the hounds and lay them on the scent. It takes just half a minute to do this, and off goes the pack, with howls which make the woods ring for two miles round.

Truly, an inspiring sight. The sixty horsemen spread away for the start, the two pretty Amazons set their lips, a mob of peasants in blue blouses form a noisy fringeing to the phaetons and barouches which have come to see the throw-off, and conspicuous amidst all this we have M. Pistache’s roan, which, unable to stand the music of the horns, first jumps, then pivots on its hind legs, and then springs off like a shot, well-nigh wrenching M. Pistache’s arms out of their sockets. Happily, there are no fences ahead just at present. In the galloping scramble which follows, M. Pistache has time to see that his Duke and a squadron of others are drawing alongside of him, and that everybody is being borne along somehow at a furious pace towards the race-course.

M. Pistache knows the racecourse, but it looks much nearer than it really is, for a clump of trees has to be passed, then a road, then a turnip-field, and at last, most trying of predicaments, a ditch full of mud. Pounding through the trees, M. Pistache claps his hand to his hat, and, fearing for the low branches, bends double over his saddle. At the road he feels himself a man again, and loses none of his nerve in the turnip-field; but at the ditch he is aware that the eyes of the two Amazons and of five dozen of the flower of France are on him, so screams, “*Houp-là!*” as we should all of us do when we mean business, tosses both arms aloft like railway signals, and gets carried triumphantly over the obstacle, with his nose on the roan’s ears and both feet out of the stirrups.

All this time M. Pistache had seen nothing of the stag, nor of the hounds, who have tailed out of sight; but glancing round as he kicks for his stirrups, he sees the grass pink with strewn compatriots, who have come to grief over that ditch, and the spectacle

fills him with a just pride, though he would very much like to know whither he is going. There seems no immediate chance of his ascertaining this ; for the whole field are harking back from the racecourse towards those infernal trees again, and the roan goes with them, tearing away like the very fiend. "Hold him in, or you'll both get blown," shouts M. de Sangbleu, flashing by as firm in his saddle as if he were in a riding school. Hold him in—bitter mockery!—the brute seems to have got the bit between his teeth, and then there is that confounded huntsman playing away with his horn again just in front.

Down like rushing thunder among the brushwood, past one clump of trees after another, out over a piece of park lawn, where the roan jostles all the other horses as if he were in a cavalry charge and that hedge yonder were a line of Prussians ; and so, panting, choking, and feeling as if the biceps of both his arms were going to burst through his sleeves, M. Pistache gets hurried onwards, commending himself desperately to the good St. Hubert, the huntsman's patron. But this sort of thing cannot last long, nor does it. M. Pistache is vaguely conscious of being hallooed to by fifty tongues at once, and of flying alone in his glory in the very midst of the hounds, who appear to have suddenly sprung yelling out of the earth to embarrass his horse's hoofs. In vain does he pull at his bridle, weigh fiercely upon his stirrups, opening his legs wide for the purpose, like a pair of compasses ; in vain does he strike his road over head, neck, and haunches, bawling, "*Maudite bête du diable, arrête-toi donc !*" The *maudite bête*, gone comfortably mad by this time, only gallops the faster, kicking up turf, twigs, and leaves in clouds behind, and heading straight for the lake which surrounds the smaller château of Chantilly.

There is no doubt of it, the stag has taken to the water. M. Pistache can see its antlered head bobbing over the grey tide, and he can see that in less than a minute he will be in the tide too. But what shall a Pistache do under such circumstances ? Give way to despair ? Not he. After all, if a stag is to be killed, why

not have the undivided honour of swimming after him and killing him in the water? Thus rapidly argues this fearless Frenchman in the brief twenty seconds left him to plant his hat over his brow, fling away his whip, unsheath his dirk, and shout for the tenth time on that stirring day, "*Houp-là!*" The wind whistles in his face, the steam from the horse's nostrils fills his eyes, but yet another stride and the gallant leap is taken. As the field canter up to the lake's edge nothing is to be seen of M. Pistache but the soles of his new hunting boots eddying in a foam of bubbles; only the roan, with a cowardice unparalleled in these latitudes, has allowed its rider to take his leap alone. In fact, it bucked, and the upshot of the matter is that two "whips" dismount, push out a punt, and fish out M. Pistache with a boat-hook.

For all that, the glory of the day is his, and the annals of the Pistache family shall record to the end of time how Anatole Pistache was led to the Château de Chantilly and dressed in a suit of the illustrious owner's clothes while his own were being telegraphed for from Paris. Also, how he dined with Princes of the Blood, who complimented him on his coolness in the saddle and on his surpassing valour in the water.

CHAPTER III.

NEW YEAR'S GIFTS.

THE bells of Sainte Rosemonde are ringing out a New Year's carol ; troops of housewives on their way to market are turning aside into the churches to begin the twelvemonth propitiously with an early mass ; the toyshops, flower-shops, and the shops of the four rival princes of the bonbon trade, Siraudin, Boissier, Guerre, and Jullien, are open and active in despite of the fog ; commissionaires in blue velveteen are hurriedly crossing one another on the pavements with parcels corded by ribbons, pink, blue, and violet ; everywhere, from crowded wine-shops, cab-stands, omnibus offices, and tobacco bureaux resounds the cheery wish, " Je vous la souhaite bonne et heureuse ; " and Paris in short is waking to the smiles and bustle of its gayest holiday.

Its gayest holiday ? Strictly speaking, this is perhaps not true. So long as the liberalities of New Year's tide were confined to recompensing one's dependents and scattering sugar-plums among one's kinsfolk, a Frenchman might carry his head high, take leave of December without flinching, and indeed gladly welcome the *Jour de l'An* ; but what was once an optional custom has now become a compulsory tax, and who can tell with what silent gnashing of teeth the 1st of January is looked forward to by thousands of bachelor Frenchmen whose budgets require to be stretched like a new glove before they can cover the twelvemonth ? The muttered anathemas of the petty bourgeois, of the underpaid clerk, of the half-pay line captain, and of the whole tribe of grovelling folk—who, finding it a grievous business to make the two ends meet, have no ambition to seem richer than they really

are—must give that Recording Angel of Sterne's a heap of trouble in the four days from St. Sylvester's feast to St. Geneviève's.

As to servants of all degrees—the concierge, newspaper carrier, postman, the Auvergnat who brings up the wood and the coals and the Limousin who forgets to sweep the snow off the doorstep—it is just that they should be rewarded in excess of their needs or deserts ; but by what ingenuity of logic has it come to be necessary that a man should leave a twenty-franc box of sweetmeats at every house where he has dined, or been invited to swallow yellow tea in the course of the year ? We say a twenty-franc box, because unless a man would be eternally disgraced in the eyes of his contemporaries, he can no longer offer a glazed paper *cornet*, even though it be filled with *marrons glacés* at seven francs the pound. And a twenty-franc box is not estimated overmuch, for it is suited at the utmost to somebody of the middle classes, and is utterly unworthy of presentation at the hands of a nobleman like the Duc de Sanghieu.

It is by no means enough that a man should recklessly enter upon a course of bonbon-purchasing. Life is nothing without tact, and upon the more or less thoughtfulness bestowed on the choice of the gifts will depend their value in the eyes of the receiver. For instance, sweetmeats, though of innumerable variety, may be arbitrarily classed under three heads—the soft, the hard, and the sticky ; and a giver is bound carefully to consider whether the lady for whom he is buying will have reasons to prefer one kind more than the other.

If she have not pretty teeth, it is evident that a gift of hard *pralines* may be viewed with horror as a premeditated slight ; whereas if her comely lips are lined with thirty-two adamantine pearls, where would be the grace of offering her *fondants* which would oblige her to close her mouth, and thereby diminish half her enjoyment ? As to sticky bonbons—candied fruits and such like—they are always welcome to ladies with shapely hands, and a man harassed by doubts as to the beauty of a fair friend's mouth will generally be pretty safe in selecting them, for, indeed, not

only do most ladies believe in the shapeliness of their hands, but sticky sweetmeats afford them a pretext for little mincing displays of finger and lip, nibblings and cries of "Ah, c'est bon !" which cannot but commend themselves to appreciators of the beautiful.

However, when the question as to the quality of a sweetmeat has been disposed of, there still remains the political question, which may be a terrible stumbling-block to the unwary. Politics in bonbons? Alas, yes. Since politics have arrayed the violet and the lily in opposite camps, and forced the barndoor cock to become the champion of constitutional royalty as against the Caesarist eagle, it is not surprising that significance should be attached to the emblems decorating a box of sweetmeats. A Faubourg St. Germain countess may wax terribly frigid if she finds violets embroidered on the satin of a gift-box, and frowns may corrugate the brow of even the most placid Republican if he discovers on his wife's table a casket emblazoned with the *fleurs-de-lys* of the Bourbons. There are boxes which are predestined to the Chaussée d'Antin and others to the noble Faubourg; caskets which are presentable in the Champs Elysées, but would occasion scandal in the Marais. So far have the political uses of *étrennes* been pushed that the confectioners are obliged to keep a cool and careful eye on the poets attached to their establishment, and to see that verses intended for a white box with lilies on no account find their way into one adorned with crowing cocks or violets.

At an early hour this New Year's morn Aristide, the discreet servant of M. Pistache, glides on tiptoe into the room where his master is reclining under a gilt canopy with majestic bed-curtains of crimson satin, and murmurs: "I have the honour to wish to Monsieur a happy year; and the concierge, the postman, and the newspaper-carrier all beg me to convey to Monsieur their most respectful salutations." After which speech Aristide lays by M. Pistache's bedside two oranges in silver paper, gifts of the concierge; a one-sou almanack, homage of the postman; and a

circular on cream paper, gratifying compliment of the newspaper-carrier.

M. Pistache does not eat oranges between his repasts, and he would not affront walls papered by the most distinguished upholsterer in Paris by hanging thereon a one-sou almanack ; but he appears much touched by these several tributes from loyal dependents, and, turning to a Sèvres *vide-poches* beside him, fingers a bundle of blue bank-notes prepared over-night for the occasion : " My thanks to the concierge, Aristide, and these forty francs, this twenty-franc piece between the postman and the carrier, and these two notes for yourself. No thanks, I beg ; you have served me faithfully ; " and M. Pistache, with the condescending gesture of a master just in all his works, prepares to rise.

In the course of the next hour he receives good wishes on paper more or less creamy from the washerwoman, the Auvergnat who brings him wood and coals, the scavengers who sweep the roadway opposite his lodgings, the box-openers of the Comédie Française and Grand Opéra, two " whips " of the Chantilly hounds, and a variety of other affectionate persons to the number of a dozen more, so that before his shaving is over M. Pistache has parted with about four hundred francs' worth of seasonable acknowledgments. But this is nothing—a mere laying of the dust for the achievements which are to crown the day.

In the smart drawing-room which adjoins M. Pistache's bed-chamber the table groans under an assortment of bonbon boxes, toys, gift-books, and costly knick-knacks piled a foot high, all of which will have to be distributed before nightfall if M. Pistache would retain during the dawning year the reputation for *savoir vivre* and gallantry which shone like a halo above his head throughout the old one.

Now on introducing M. Pistache to the reader, we took leave to observe that his income was twenty thousand francs, or £800, and if we test this budget by the ordinary expenses of a Parisian bachelor of distinction we obtain these figures :—Lodging (entresol near the Champs Elysées), £100 ; firing, £20 ; lighting,

£10 ; washing, £30 ; rates and taxes, £25 ; morning chocolate, at home, £20 ; breakfast and dinner by "abonnement" at a crack restaurant, £120 ; dress (by yearly subscription to a "High Life" tailor, on principles we may explain some other day), £40 ; servant, £70 ; club, £12 ; newspapers and books, £10 ; total, £457. There remain then, £343 for gloves, hats, cabs, theatres, and the thousand items of pocket-money, which is not a large sum as times go ; but what shall be said of it when New Year's *étrennes* saddle it with an impost of something like £100 ?

The reader may, perhaps, fancy M. Pistache seeking out a lonely avenue of the Bois de Boulogne at the approach of the New Year, and shrieking out his despair to the winds at a custom more grinding than the Car of Juggernaut. But this would be an erroneous fancy. It is the bourgeois who feels sick at heart, whereas in the Parisian *grand monde* which M. Pistache adorns *étrennes* afford an opportunity for the display of the generosity, good taste, and inventive wit which should be the appanage of every Frenchman, and M. Pistache would not have them done away with for the world. What if the practice costs money ?—but then so does everything worth having, from a song to a truffle, cost money. And how set off the expenditure of a few score of miserable twenty-franc pieces against the unbounded satisfaction which vanity derives from the bestowal of gifts grandly purchased and smilingly received ?

M. Pistache making out his list of New Year's presents in the middle of December was a happier man than a newly-created Cardinal trying on the sacred purple. There is not a house where M. Pistache dined last year but will get a box of sugar-plums for its hostess. The gift-books on the table are for the boys of the hostesses, the drumming rabbits and Punches for the tender infants who have squealed at M. Pistache's moustaches, the dolls and doll *trousseaux* for the well-dressed little girls—one of whom will perhaps become Madame Pistache at some distant day, when, having few teeth and little hair left, our friend considers himself qualified for matrimony. Then look at

yonder columns of five and ten-franc pieces, and consider that the different footmen and majordomos who are to pocket them will bless M. Pistache in the servants' hall, call out his name as De Pistache, perhaps Count Pistache, when he comes visiting, and wrap him up when he goes away on ball nights as if he were a son of theirs. Perhaps the custom which obliges M. Pistache to give a few tokens of esteem to men friends—a revolver to one, a pocket-book to a second, a box of cigars to a third—is less defensible than the usage from which ladies and children are the gainers; but even this has its compensation, for it will enable M. Pistache to offer his good friend, the Duc de Sangbleu, a remarkable riding-whip, and to receive in exchange a ring with a gracious motto.

But where the triumph of the *étrennes* system becomes most fully revealed is in the case of that towering fabric of velvet, gold cord, ivory, and Valenciennes lace, which occupies the centre of M. Pistache's table. This beautiful structure, which cost about fifteen guineas, holds of sweetmeats some two quarts, and will be presented to Madame de Rosethé along with a Havannah puppy, which has been yelping in M. Pistache's antechamber all night. Madame de Rosethé is a lady whom M. Pistache much worships, and the verses which envelope the sweetmeats, as also the madrigal graven on the silver collar of the dog, will apprise her of this romantic fact. Call *étrennes* a ruinous custom after this! Why, M. Pistache asserts it is a glorious custom. Setting out for his visits at mid-day in a hired brougham packed close with all the sweetmeats, dolls, toys, books, revolvers and cigars, and holding the Havannah puppy on his knees, M. Pistache is like a second Caesar starting with his baggage for the conquest of Gaul.

Good luck to him! And now a glance at the other side of the question. We do not mean at the objections to the *étrennes* custom—for, as we have just pointed out, there are none—but a glance at Madame de Rosethé who is to receive the dog, the sugar-plums, and the verses of gallant M. Pistache. Madame

de Rosethé is one of those ladies of the Parisian *grand monde* who have the tact to raise up a sighing train of admirers, and to leave them sighing for the greater honour and peace of mind of M. de Rosethé. She is not one of those little ladies of the Imperial era who danced lightly with their high-heeled boots over prejudices, principles, and even propriety. She sets the fashions; does not copy them from third-rate actresses. She is charitable—not always in her remarks concerning the ladies her rivals—but towards such well-thinking paupers as the parish priest recommends; and she embroiders altar-cloths for her village church in her spare moments.

Madame de Rosethé visits at the archbishopric; is on the Duchesse de la Rochefoucauld's list of intimates; has the Comte de Mun to dinner, when she can get him, attends the Théâtre Français every Tuesday, and suffers none other than M. Octave Feuillet's and M. Jules Sandeau's novels to lie on her table. When she goes to such places of entertainment as the Bouffes, the Variétés, or the Folies Dramatiques, Madame de Rosethé sits in a *loge grillée*, and she professes never to have seen the inside of the Palais Royal theatre, though she is silent on this topic when her confessor is present. Madame de Rosethé's language is such as Madame de Staël's Corinne might have spoken, and M. de Châteaubriand have admired. There are no Anglicanisms in it, and no abbreviations, for Madame de Rosethé never misses a reception at the Académie Française, and thinks M. de Viel-Castel a much finer writer than M. Edmond About. If worthy Brantôme were still on earth, he would class Madame de Rosethé among his "*grandes et fort honnêtes dames*," and it is not so easy to be a *grande dame*—unless, indeed, it be one of those whom M. Arsène Houssaye dignifies by that name.

On New Year's Day the Hôtel Rosethé overflows with streams of visitors from twelve o'clock till long past dusk. Think, that scandal which visits the Faubourg St. Germain now and then with as little ceremony as lesser quarters has never touched Madame de Rosethé with even a stray feather of its red wings,

so that people come to bow to her as to a social divinity who has a right to public reverence. And all the worshippers bring sacrifices of sweetmeats with them, till tables, chiffonnières, and even chairs are encumbered with boxes each more gaudy than its fellows. It becomes at last a very riot of gifts. M. de Rosethé stands on the hearthrug, with a fire of beech logs behind him, and greets the donors, half of whom he does not know, with a grave courtesy as if he were pontifically giving them his blessing; Madame de Rosethé sits on a sofa, smiles radiantly, gives her hand to be kissed by such adorers as the Duc de Sangbleu, and finds, by some miraculous ingenuity all her own, a new formula of greeting for every fresh comer.

When M. Pistache arrives he feels as if he had got suddenly into the sunniest groves of the seventh heaven on beholding Madame de Rosethé take his Havannah dog in her lap and cover him with embraces. How M. Pistache wishes he were that dog, but he has the consolation of reflecting that the touching verses in that amazing two-quart box of his, which it takes a footman for itself to carry in, may perhaps some day put him on a footing almost as favoured as the pup's. Alas! poor M. Pistache, a lady, however "*grande et honnête*," cannot eat all these sweetmeats herself, not even if her best friends help her; so, like other ladies of the *grand monde*, Madame de Rosethé makes it a pious habit to give away nine-tenths of her bonbons to children's hospitals or girls' schools.

That unique casket which was the glory of the famous Sirardin repository, which stirred up in M. Pistache's pulse so many a hopeful throb, and cost him fifteen guineas in money, will be given as a prize to the best-conducted young lady at the school of the Legion of Honour at St. Denis. And the young lady will use the casket, when empty, as a work-box, and by-and-by as a receptacle for the love-letters sent her by an honest lieutenant sprung from the ranks. As to the verses, the lady superior of St. Denis will carefully extract them and burn them as literature at once profane and frivolous.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DAY OF A LADY OF RANK.

It is eleven o'clock, and the Marquis de Mignonnette, a member of the Royalist minority of the Chamber of Deputies, has gone to keep an appointment with some of his colleagues at the Palais Bourbon, and Madame la Marquise de Mignonnette, arrayed in a discreet morning dress, which is not much to look at unless described on an invoice, comes down, steps into her brougham, and says to her footman, "A l'Œuvre des Chauves."

In all Paris there can certainly be no more pious institution than this "Œuvre des Chauves," founded to supply wigs to well-behaved paupers who have been stricken with baldness. No wig is bestowed except on a certificate of character signed by the parish priest, and the ladies-patronesses are most sedulous in visiting the bald at their own homes in order to see whether they are truly deserving recipients of charity, and if so to cheer them in their affliction. The "Œuvre" has offices of its own, a few clerks, a secretary, and a warm council room, with arm-chairs of scarlet leather, and a statuette of King Charles the Bald beaming upon the good work from a pedestal behind the lady president's seat.

It turns out that Madame de Mignonnette, who is one of the most indefatigable of vice-presidents, has mistaken the hour of meeting, and, much to her annoyance, rustles into the council room when the proceedings have almost terminated. Her chair, next the president (Madame de Rosethé), is empty, however, and she would glide towards it unobtrusively if the courteous and earnest secretary, l'Abbé de St. Toupet, did not pause in the report he is reading to shut the door behind her, and to assure

himself that she has a hassock. This civility allows all the other eleven ladies on the committee to exchange affectionate queries with Madame de Mignonnette, and the latter has time to lay her handkerchief, smelling-bottle, and purse all comfortably near her blotting-book, to draw off her gloves, and sweetly to thank the Abbé de St. Toupet for poking the fire, before that graceful ecclesiastic begs and obtains permission to continue his reading.

It would do any tender heart good to see the twelve ladies, each armed with a new quill pen, jot down notes of the Abbé's remarks upon the beautiful cream-laid paper, stamped with the image of Charles the Bald aforesaid, and with the motto of the association—"Capillos qui meruit ferat." M. de St. Toupet's ably drawn report treats at length of all the meritorious bald whom the Abbé has visited, and contains thoughtful considerations on the origin and growth of baldness, the alarming increase of which in our own times must be ascribed to the spread of infidel literature. After mature reflection the Abbé thinks he can advise the bestowal of sixteen wigs; and he concludes by relating the touching story of a pauper to whom the association had at its last sitting voted a coal-black wig with a parting down the middle, and who, meeting in church with a man balder than himself, nobly made him a gift of this prize won by his own virtue. Need it be said that a few refreshing tears bedew the eyes of the committee, and general emotion ensues when Madame de Rosethé moves from the chair that this high-souled but hairless Christian shall be presented forthwith with two wigs, a black one for Sundays and a brown one for weekdays?

The motion having been carried by acclamation; nothing remains but the vote on the other fifteen wigs, and this too is done with unanimity, save in the case of one wig which the Abbé claims for an aged sweep whom he had caught reading the *Siècle* newspaper. It is true that the man repented, but is the Abbé sure that his repentance was sincere? M. de St. Toupet trusts, and believes it was sincere; but suggests as a compromise that the sweep shall receive for the present a second quality lank-haired

wig, and be encouraged by the prospect of a curly wig in a twelve-month's time to read only the *Monde* or the *Univers*.

It takes but a few minutes after this to sign the accounts and make out a draft for the funds necessary; and then, the meeting being adjourned, the ladies-patronesses of "L'Œuvre des Chanvres" rise, chattily folding their notes and drawing on their gloves; and Madame de Réséda, who is second V.P., asks Madame de Mignonnette to come with her and inspect the studio of that great painter, M. Rougebrosse. Madame de Réséda is an enlightened friend of the arts—this is her spécialité, as bantam-collecting may be that of other ladies—and surely if there be a time when the heart is more than usually open to the impressions of stirring pictures it is when the charitable thoughts of a whole morning have moved it to its depths. So Madame de Mignonnette, after wishing good speed to l'Abbé de St. Toupet in his kind work of wig giving, goes out with Madame de Réséda to honour M. Rougebrosse.

It always gratifies an artist like M. Rougebrosse to be disturbed in his day's work by an unexpected visit from enlightened admirers. His model, who is posturing for Phryne, flies into the next room; his pupils, busy squeezing colours on to their palettes, mix indigo with ochre; and he himself, instead of shining in the velvet jacket and violet handkerchief commonly associated with studios, is surprised in a holland blouse smudged with paint, a disordered head of hair, hands unwashed, and a brown meerschaum. Then, when he has laid by his mahlstick and joked apologetically about his appearance, it gives him pleasure to ransack his albums; turn up all his half-begun and abandoned sketches, standing dusty with their faces against the wall; shift his easel sideways, three-quarterwise, screw it up, down, and half-way; join in a laugh about his properties—bits of armour, arquebuses, and trunk-hose; appease the well-justified terror of the lady who has mistaken the lay figure in its toga for a real man, and screamed; and, finally, listen to a disquisition on the works of the old masters. Imagine a novelist interrupted

in the middle of a chapter to state his preferences between Bacon and the venerable Bede, and you get the cream of it.

M. Rougebrosse, who has so often sipped a cup of tea in Madame de Réséda's drawing-room, is naturally enchanted at the opportunity of repaying this hospitality, even at the cost of explaining why Rubens' "Descent from the Cross" does not remind him of M. Cabanel's style of painting, as it does Madame de Mignonnette. Madame de Réséda does not know Rubens nor like him ; but she appeals to M. Rougebrosse as to whether that "Phryne" of his has not the boldness of Titian's outlines blended with the softer touches that make up the subtle mysticism of Murillo ; and pray what can be deeper than such criticism as this ?

When M. Rougebrosse has showed the ladies everything, down to his most promising pupil, and thankfully accepted advice as to how his Phryne's hair should be dressed ; also as to her posturing—"he need only turn her round half an inch to make her perfect"—then it occurs to Madame de Réséda that M. Rougebrosse would be happy to do her portrait. Madame de Mignonnette thinks the same as to hers, and this is always the crowning triumph of an historical painter—the request that sends him back to his work in a peaceful frame of mind towards himself and the world. Madame de Réséda would not mind being introduced into an allegory. Madame de Mignonnette has an idea that if M. Rougebrosse could paint the twelve lady patronesses of "L'Œuvre des Chanves" in the guise of the twelve months of the year working under the eyes of Faith, Hope, and Charity, this picture would cause a sensation at next year's Salon.

All this is discussed as M. Rougebrosse is escorting the enlightened ladies down his staircase. The model in the next room has had time to nibble a bag of sweetmeats provided for her recreation in such emergencies ; the pupils are asking one another with grins whether they have noticed the master's brow darkling into the subtle mysticism of Murillo ; the door downstairs closes, and M. Rougebrosse comes up again scattering mild expletives about

him—probably blessings. The ladies have gone, and if we run after them we shall find them for the next half-hour at the pastry-cook's in the Rue Castiglione, fortifying themselves for their next visit—one to Mr. Girth's, the dressmaker's.

But Mr. Girth is a much more leonine personage than his brother artist, M. Rougebrosse, for there is no offering him advice or criticism. Large looking-glasses adorn his lowermost vestibule, and flash back half a dozen copies of you as you step humbly across his *porte-cochère*. Exotics and statues fill the staircase, muffled with a carpet thick as turf; the screeching of silk, the gliding lisp of satin, the heavy murmur of velvet, are the music that await you on the first landing, and when you have penetrated into the inner rooms be happy and watch those dresses go by, borne aloft by the *demoiselles essayeuses*—dresses for St. Petersburg, Vienna, Rome; dresses to be laid on beds of cotton-wool in double tinned packing-cases, air-proof, water-proof, proof against everything but fire, thunder, and the little errors of railway pointsmen.

No woman can look upon this sight and not feel her pulses throb. Even Mesdames de Réséda and de Mignonnette, who are inured by long habit, seem abashed. They ask for Mr. Girth, and this potentate arrives—small, cold, correct, with manners placid, clothes trim, and the eye of Napoleon at Austerlitz. He knows that the ladies have come about their dresses for the first reception at the Elysée, and with a couple of curt sentences to the point—for he has no breath to waste—passes them on to the trying-rooms. There are trying-rooms for day-costumes eastward, with the sun full on them; rooms for ball-dresses, with walls and ceiling of plate-glass, and gas flaring fiercely from the four corners; and a room for theatrical dresses, fitted up with a small stage and footlights.

When the wearer has donned her robes, then Mr. Girth reappears escorted by "Mademoiselle Première," his lieutenant, armed with a note-book; and in six rapid glances examines the work of his craftswomen. A crease to be effaced here—an inch of trim-

ming to be altered there—a fold to be amplified; these things are indicated in brief tones. Or if it be the second trying and there be nothing to change, there is a minute of purposeful silence, during which the victim bates her breath, and then follows the decree :—“Cela vous va bien, Madame”—“Signed by Me, *Yo el Rey*,” as the Spanish kings used to grandly write. Such is the sense of Mr. Girth’s little speech; and we may take it that the formula has its magic, for our two *grandes dames*, as they emerge from the house, having both graduated in first-class honours, smile with pink faces upon this whirling earth, and appear to feel how glad a place it is.

But now three o’clock is on the strike, and there is time but for a fast trot to the Bois and two turns round the lake before the lamplighters will be dotting their red stars over Paris. Madame de Mignonnette is to dine out, and at five o’clock must be home for the visit of her coiffeur, the unrivalled M. Narcisse—another artist, who gives three-quarters of an hour of his time for twenty francs. But the avocations of this gifted being belong to the evening of a *grande dame*, and we are here chronicling only the day. Every day is as well spent as the above.

CHAPTER V.

POLITICAL SERMONS.

EVERY Frenchman having a soul to save attends—or should attend—Mass ; but Mass is nothing without a good political sermon. Now, of political preachers there are three sorts—first, the honest fellow with blue worsted stockings, who yells to his village flock that voting for the Republican candidate will bring a visit from the devil—which would seem to imply that the devil takes a peculiar interest in the Conservative cause ; next, the lean novice, hot from the seminary, who has seen a cardinal's hat dangle above him in a nightmare, and hopes to clamber to it over a pile of encyclical adjectives ; last, the scholarly monk, who has no stockings and has learned to moderate his adjectives, but who makes a fine business of it by dashing peppery conclusions at the nineteenth century from the pulpit of a mundane church.

It is to this last kind of preacher that we beg to call attention, and whom could we better select for introduction than the Rev. Frère Ignivore, of the Flaminian order, who wears a gown of black serge and a coil of rope round his waist ? As regards the wearing, this black gown may be no more uncomfortable in winter than an Ulster coat, and in summer, being worn of lighter texture, it amounts simply to going about the streets in one's dressing-gown, with the additional solace of being respected and bowed to by all devout believers for the trouble. But, as regards spiritual effect, this habit is half the making of Brother Ignivore, as it has been of many another monk before him. For, let a preacher be Greekful, graceful, and forceful as he will, let him have the warmth of Bossuet and the unction of Fénelon, if he

draws out a gold hunting watch in the middle of his sermon as the vicaires of the Madeleine are so much given to doing, or if he flourishes a cambric handkerchief which vaguely tickles the nostrils of the churchwardens below with an odour of *millefleurs*, as is done at St. Thomas d'Aquin ; or if, like the clergy of M. de Sangbleu's parish of Ste. Rosemonde, his daily apparel be polished leather shoes, a cassock of the glossiest Elbœuf cloth, and a sash of ribbed Lyons silk, why then his hold over the consciences of the *grand monde* of Paris will only be as that of a man who grasps softly with a kid glove.

But Brother Ignivore, with his rope, serge, sandals, and tonsured head, can grasp with a horny clutch, and does so. To see him stride gauntly up the nave, with eyes downcast and hands buried in his sleeves, is a sight to make gentle flesh creep. Watch little Madame de Rosethé and her two pretty friends the Comtesse de Réséda and the Marquise de Mignonnette as the friar's gown brushes roughly by their silk dresses. He looks disenthroned from the pious ages, a man cut black and haggard out of Queen Bertha's illuminated missal, wherein none but hungry monks are depicted. The ladies cannot be expected to know that Frère Ignivore reads the newspapers every morning as he takes his coffee, and would even chide the attendant brother who was late in bringing him these essentials. They cannot be aware that he is made much of by the brotherhood as a monk reflecting honour on the Flaminians, that clostral rules are relaxed in his favour, and that his cell is a well-warmed, well-furnished study, with a look-out on to a bright priory garden. In their belief Brother Ignivore is a man who, like the prophets of old, comes forth to scourge the vices of a world in which he holds no lot, and to hear him do this is one of the social duties—nay, pleasures—of Lent and Christmastide.

Accordingly, Brother Ignivore has been engaged to preach from Advent to the Epiphany in the Church of Ste. Rosemonde. His engagement was not effected without difficulty, for there is a fervent competition between the different churches ; and when

the chapter of Notre Dame does not claim the popular preacher of the day—as it has the right to do, free of charge—the possession of him is disputed for, like most other choice things in this profane world, with bank notes. Five hundred francs a sermon—paid not to the Brother himself but to his order—settled the contest in favour of Ste. Rosemonde as against a less open-handed church, which only offered four hundred and fifty, and Ste. Rosemonde has in consequence become the resort of all well-clothed penitents this winter.

It seems generally admitted that sermons at £20 apiece are not composed for small fry, and the small fry have the good taste to keep away. Brother Ignivore's listeners belong to the fraternity of notable Parisians. Royalist senators and deputies are there dotted about like truffles amid a caking of monarchical authors, duchesses, historical painters, Conservative journalists, white, blue, and violet, eminent priests from other churches, monks, black, brown, and grey, foreign attachés, retired diplomatists, ex-prefects, sacked as being "reactionary" by the Radical powers of nowadays, and even actresses of the sort who admit to being thirty-five—which is theatrical for fifty—and desire to make a good end.

But the inevitable reporter, who peers from behind a pillar, note-book in hand, detects something better than all this in the shape of a nest of illustrious infidels grouped together as if they meant to brazen it out in company; and be sure that, although the Duc de Sangbleu and his friend M. Pistache regard the presence of these persons as an intrusion most outrageous, Brother Ignivore will be of a different opinion and glory secretly, as his keen eye meets these tough foes from the pulpit. And he is right to glory, for the infidels would not have stirred out of doors if they did not acknowledge in him a monk worth listening to. They want to hear what he has to say about the events of the past twelvemonth, and have come to the sermon in which Brother Ignivore has promised to pass men and things in review.

This is the most important sermon of the series; it is the one

with which we ourselves are concerned, and it has filled the Church of Ste. Rosemonde to suffocation. Up both aisles and the nave, in each one of the lateral chapels, round the font, and inside the very confessional—everywhere, in short, where a human being can be stowed without stifling—there stands or sits somebody with eyes and ears on the strain; and the sight of all these expectant faces is undoubtedly an imposing one.

Under the Second Empire there was always a frivolousness about the congregations who attended political sermons which marred the effect of the solemnity. One felt that the ladies in loud dresses and the gentlemen in waxed moustaches had come to be seen as at Longchamps or the opera; besides which, in Imperial times, sermons had just as much weight in politics as a well-played oratorio, and no more. But nowadays the words of such a monk as Brother Ignivore are not likely to die away at the church porch; they are seeds which may take root and yield fruits in fierce party controversies; they will lash the loins of the infidels in power and stimulate the resistance of the faithful.

The dresses of the ladies mark the change that has blown over the land, for they are not loud but rich and dark. The officiating clergy, too, wear the placid looks of men who are standing in the midst of devout believers ready to support them, and that sumptuous personage the beadle, who flaunts a pair of golden epaulets and a satin baldrick, clanks his halbert majestically after escorting the preacher to the pulpit stairs, as if he were ready to do something bold at a moment's notice. So Brother Ignivore folds his hands over his breast and makes his genuflexion eastwards; then, when the congregation has been hushed into a dead stillness, lifts his head and in a singing voice gives out his text: "Wild bulls of Bashan compassed me about."

It is a fact that in French political sermons and in bishops' pastorals the Bashan bulls are pressed into frequent service; and none of Brother Ignivore's hearers can doubt whom he intends to class among these bulls. The sermon commences with an inquiry into the causes of revolutions. In the ages of faith there

were no revolutions. From the happy hour when Clovis was baptized at Rheims until the day when Voltaire came and grinned at kneeling humanity, men were obedient, contented, well nourished, and did not meddle in matters too high for them. Friar Ignivore somehow contrives to forget the Jacqueries, Albigeneses, Lollards, and Hussites, the wars of the League and of the Fronde, when Parisians showed themselves much what they are nowadays ; but probably most of his hearers forget too, so that it does not matter—the less so as, if anybody did not forget, he must nevertheless hold his peace, seeing that a preacher is privileged to arrange facts as he chooses without being refuted.

And Brother Ignivore is a great arranger of facts. Hark to him sketching the middle ages and the prosperous peasant of those times, flourishing under the two-fold protection of his priest and his lord. The Duc de Sangbleu, whose ancestors certainly protected the peasant, when they took care of his money, and, now and then, of his wife, is much moved ; and so is M. Pistache, who sees himself helping the Duke to govern a regenerated tenantry on these old protective principles. All this while Brother Ignivore's voice has been low and vibrating. He is a master of mystical word-painting, and he would be no Frenchman if he could not throw in a touch of humour to daub the detractors of his middle ages as mean, silly fellows. This prepares one for the Bashan bulls, who come rushing up presently one after another ; then the Brother's voice rises, quivers, and seems to crackle in its sarcasm.

Mesdames de Rosethé, de Réséda, and de Mignonnette shudder and feel a little afraid. The monk has such sardonic gestures as he asks modern society what has become of his prosperous peasant ? What, indeed, does become of the peasant who is deprived of Church protection ? It takes the Brother ten minutes to work out this painful problem in all its bearings, and to follow the peasant in his successive degradations till he sinks into the working man striking for more wages and claiming to be an ape. But at the word ape Brother Ignivore's choler bursts through the

restraints of sarcasm, and he plunges into his annual review, brandishing his black sleeves aloft as if he had a goad in his hand and wanted to be girding at the striking apes and the bulls of Bashan who have caused the last year to be a failure.

Does not every true believer's heart—he asks—throb with righteous indignation at the thought that the enemies of the Faith still rear their unhallowed heads and indulge in their impious lowings? Then mark how scathingly he recapitulates all the sins and blunders of the Republic without even mentioning the *régime* by its title or its rulers by their names. He depicts France in the hands of anarchists and atheists, and shows how parents are even debarred from complying with the Saviour's words: "Suffer the little children to come unto me." How can the children go unto the Lord, he asks, becoming pathetic, when impious men pervert them and transform them into infidels? Everybody understands this felicitous allusion to the laws entirely suppressing religious instruction in all the public schools of whatever degree, and there is a sort of rustle and approving murmur down the church as the Brother, flushed by this time and with parched lips, thunders towards his peroration. Allusion after allusion breaks from his lips like a volley of arrows, each hitting its mark. He knows all that has happened—debates, elections, controversies, religious persecution, and resistance. He has the latest particulars about the sufferings of the Holy Father and his prolonged captivity. He can quote long passages from the so-called "Republican Manuals of Civic Morality," and analyse the atheistical poison they distil.

And now two roads lie open for the new year—at the end of one beam hope and salvation for France, saved by returning to her old traditions of Catholic faith and obedience to the Lord's anointed; at the other—and here Brother Ignivore gathers up all his energies for a final bolt of withering force—at the other is the so-called New World—"the world of atheism and vivisection, of which some knowledge may be gained by a visit to the Sorbonne"—and with this reference to M. Paul Bert (who is

said to be anxious to treat the clergy and the faithful much in the same style as he treats the poor dogs he collects for experimental purposes), Brother Ignivore performs his second genuflexion, turns and sweeps down from the pulpit. The whole congregation rise much impressed, and with a sacred, pent-up indignation against the Bashan bulls who are hurrying them towards vivisection at the hands of a medical-minded atheist.

And now, good Brother Ignivore, go back to your cell and sleep proudly on the strength of your sermon, which will make Paris drawing-rooms ring for nine days. You have spoken to the best of your lights, and if you have succeeded in inspiring half your listeners with a comfortable hatred of the age in which they live, and with a pious intolerance for the men and principles which, in despite of monks, are probably destined for yet awhile, at least, to remain in the ascendant, you have doubtless meant no harm. Only you have terribly excited M. Pistache.

CHAPTER VI.

BACHELOR LIFE.

THOSE who judged Frenchmen by the samples of the race who adorn the Parisian boulevards every afternoon from four to six would take them to be a people fond of refreshments. The serenity with which they drain those long glasses of opal poison called absinthe, their protracted sittings over that mild decoction of gentian-root, salt, and barley which seems to be especially brewed for them under the name of "bock," and their knowing cries for drinks of which the mere names pass wetly over their tongues—"vermouth-grenadine," "amer Picon," "grog Américain," "char-treuse," "bitter-cuirassé,"—all this stamps them in the foreign eye as a thirsty people.

But the café is a middle-class and Bohemian institution, frequented mainly by tradespeople, Bourse men, professional subalterns, second-rate artists, and journalists. To a Frenchman, who lives above these spheres, who claims in fact to be of the *grand monde*, the café is a place offering no more attractions than an hotel bar to a decent Englishman. He never visits it, save under compulsion, and he would apply the term *pilier d'estaminet* to those of his society who did. Foreigners, therefore, who, on the strength of their guide-books, may think that they see before them a convivial and egalitarian blending of all classes at those marble tables lining popular highways delude themselves, and they are still more mistaken if they judge any particular café by its showy outside and well-dressed customers to be an aristocratic house.

There is but one aristocratic house of beverage in Paris, and that is Tortoni's; but Tortoni's is a glacier's, not a simple café,

which makes a difference. A lady can go once in a way to Tortoni's and take an ice, accompanied by two gentlemen (note the *two*, for this is essential); or the Duc de Sangbleu and his friend M. Pistache might stroll in there after the theatre for a cup of chocolate or a glass of orgeat. But if you met either of them alone there at any other hour than breakfast time, it would be that he had an appointment; and in this case he would have ordered a glass of harmless liqueur which would be standing untasted before him when the person he expected came in. This, again, would be essential—firstly, to prove that the Duke or M. Pistache had no taste for the liqueur in question; and secondly, as a polite assurance to the expected comer that he was not behind his time. When Frenchmen in High Life lay down social laws they hedge them with a delicate shading of observances the breach of which is winced at like a misspelt participle; and as regards cafés the merits of the case may be summed up in the remark that to be seen refreshing oneself alone there is thoroughly bad form.

The Duc de Sangbleu belongs to one of the four prominent clubs in Paris, and so of course does M. Pistache, who passed in on his friend's shoulders. It is a grandiose place which differs from a London club in that it occupies a suite of rooms only instead of an entire palace, is more costly to breakfast and dine at than even the Café Anglais, and is given over from 11 p.m. every night until past three in the morning to little games of hazard, at which a man may lose double his year's income without surprising any one, not even the waiters. But this club is not haunted by young men save till four or five in the afternoon; throughout the earlier part of the day it belongs to elderly members of the sort who read the *Revue des Deux Mondes* and talk feelingly about one another's digestions. Neither the Duke nor M. Pistache make of the club their home, nor have their letters addressed there, and M. Pistache does not even dine in the place, for he could scarcely walk into the dining-room without being called upon to join a table where there were three or four men

richer than himself, and if he yielded often to this temptation—as he needs must do to be thought a good fellow—his £800 a year would soon grow a trifle small for him.

If we want to know how M. Pistache disposes of his bachelor life without falling into money straits, let us call on him some morning when he is leaving his sumptuous rooms towards midday to breakfast at the restaurant to which he subscribes by the year, or to be the guest of the Duc de Sangbleu, who of course has a cook of his own. It was mentioned on a former occasion that M. Pistache's rooms were gorgeous with satin and upholstery, and we have only to add now that they are so because no French bachelor contents himself with a shake-down, or consents to hire furnished lodgings. To live *en garni* is opprobrium to a man. The reputable bachelor, be his revenue £8,000, £800, or £80, is expected to have chairs, tables, and bed-curtains which are his private property; and such is the coziness to which celibates like M. Pistache attain that one cannot reasonably wonder at their reluctance to introduce such a disturbing element as a wife into their homes.

As to M. Pistache's clothes, he manages them by paying £40 a year to a tailor, who supplies him with a couple of suits a year to keep, and brings him countless other suits which are taken away as soon as M. Pistache has worn them half-a-dozen times. What becomes of these left-off suits is a matter which concerns the tailor, and possibly some of his customers who are not of the *grand monde*; but in return for his £40 M. Pistache is always arrayed as imposingly as M. de Sangbleu, nor does he ever meet on the limbs of a friend addicted, like him, to the £40 system with the coat or pantaloons he discarded the week before. In his hats, scarves, hosiery, and walking-sticks, as also in his pocket-books, watch, and jewellery in general, M. Pistache is English; not that he frowns upon native workmanship, but because *grand-genre* is a species of rubric against which there is no kicking; and *grand-genre* insists that a young Frenchman of status shall be clad as if he haunted Pall Mall.

This said, it will please every one to know that for three thousand francs M. Pistache may breakfast and dine every day of the year at one of the renowned restaurants, and be served as if he were a partner of Baron Rothschild's. As he is out of town for three months out of the twelve, and either dines or breakfasts out three or four times a week during the other nine, the restaurateur does not make a bad thing of it ; but, then, neither does M. Pistache, who gets educated to all the mysteries of good cookery. Apropos of this savoury subject, it must be recorded that breakfast giving is one of those rages which grind down the Parisian bachelor as implacably as New Year's gifts and Easter eggs. A bachelor is not expected to give dinners to any man ; but an acquaintance newly introduced, a friend from the provinces, a lawyer, stockbroker, banker, or any other business person with whom the bachelor has had relations of a not unpleasant nature, counts upon a periodical breakfast, and gets it. If the breakfast be generously ordered, it should last from midday till close upon five, and the guests should feel that they profoundly love one another before they separate.

We are supposing, however, that if M. Pistache has been the guest of the Duc de Sangbleu, the breakfast has been unceremonious, for as soon as the coffee and cigars have been enjoyed the friends have to think of the committee of the Society for the Encouragement of Woodcocks, which is to meet at M. de Sangbleu's house at two. The woodcocks are encouraged by MM. de Sangbleu and Pistache on the same principle as the Bald are cared for by Mesdames de Rosethé and de Mignonnette, because men of the world must do something good with their time. The Duke is president of the society, and M. Pistache derives a very pardonable vanity from being one of the committee whose mission it is to distribute woodcocks' eggs impartially throughout the Departments which are suffering from a dearth of these valuables.

One may estimate the benefits conferred by the ornithophilist association by this fact, that already in Marshal MacMahon's time

the Government was appealed to, as is usual in such cases, to grant a large sum of money for the purchase of woodcocks' eggs, and the only difficulty arose from the doubt as to whether woodcocks roosted under the protection of the Minister of Commerce, his colleague of the Public Works Office, or the Board of Fine Arts. A few hundred pages of reports were printed at the expense of the Society to elucidate this moot point, but unfortunately the fall of M. de MacMahon supervened just as the question was about to be decided. Still, despite subsequent fluctuations of politics, the Society has nobly persevered in its endeavours; and for his own part M. Pistache has had the honour of accompanying a deputation which memorialized three ministers one after another in behalf of landowning sportsmen who take a natural and anxious interest in the woodcocks.

It takes two hours or so to say all that there is new to say about the woodcocks in M. de Sangbleu's study, and M. Pistache having made a speech which is warmly applauded—what French speech is not?—he feels in just the proper temper for his afternoon's ride to the Bois from four till dusk. It is a sight in itself to see him curvet and wag his head about gracefully in the Bois, to look for carriages whose occupants he may know; and, whatever his horse may think about it, that is a fine movement which consists in making the horse rear on his hind legs in order that M. Pistache may have the opportunity of bowing to ladies with greater ease and grace. Night having come, and M. Pistache having brought back his mount to the livery stable whence he hires it by the month, we may leave him to dress and dine unpeered at, but hunt him up again towards ten in the "Foyer de la Danse" or the "Foyer des Artistes" at the Grand-Opera-house.

Why should M. Pistache go into the green-rooms instead of listening to his music in the stalls, and why should M. de Sangbleu do the same? That is another of those mysteries which season the existences of High Life bachelors, for neither of the green-rooms at the Opera—that set apart for singers or that given up to the dancers—has ever possessed any of the fascination which

belongs to the "Foyer" of the Théâtre Français. The great singers are invisible, for they do not expose their precious throats in draughts, and so hurry to their dressing-rooms as soon as they are off the stage; the minor singers are more invisible still, for they desire to seem as anxious about their throats as the greater ones. The only ladies one can perceive are the dancers, cleverly plastered with violet powder; and their conversation—consisting chiefly of leaps into the air, performed for practice's sake, with both hands resting on an iron bar—lacks much of that appositeness which tends to the perpetuation of French wit. Nevertheless, M. Pistache seems to feel the happier for having his coat whitened by passing coryphées, who are whimpering that their satin shoes do not fit them: and the more illustrious young men like M. de Sangblen, of whom there may be some two dozen present, do not disdain being chaffed in the sweet banter of Belleville and of the Buttes Chaumont.

After so well-spent an evening, both the Duke and his friend would do best to go home and sleep; but they have not called at their club that day, and midnight is just the time when a visit to this pleasant place is most desirable. All the fogeys of the "Cercle" are safely off and slumbering, for the hour of good fun has struck. As M. de Sangblen and M. Pistache mount the staircase and penetrate into the dazzling room, at the door of which a blue and red footman relieves them of their coats and hats, none but the choicest spirits of the club remain, and these choice spirits are clamped round a set of tables, at which the fast clinking of gold and the ruffling of bank-notes form an enlivening melody.

There is nothing much going on at these tables, only écarté at ten napoleons the point, with a hundred thrown in for the game; but at the bigger table there is a merry spell of baccarat, at which some gentleman of the Bourse has just lost ten thousand francs in half an hour. He is yearing his dress-coat inside out, for luck's sake; and another beside him sports a bit of the rope with which some man hanged himself looped round his neck cravat-wise, for this also woos fortune. As fast as a player is cleaned out, he turns

to the club treasurer and borrows on parole, and when the treasurer's box gets empty—which it does somehow as a matter of habit towards 2 A.M.—then pen and ink come into request, and the losers sign notes of hand as briskly as one could wish.

Let us do the Faubourg St. Germain the justice to own that its scions generally leave these amusing pastimes to those among the members who have no great names to keep up, and nobody ever caught M. de Sangbleu flying kites over the club table, nor ever will. French gamblesomeness, however, is not so dead within him but that the Duke loves to risk now and then all the pocket-money he has about him, and M. Pistache follows suit intrepidly. On the present night M. de Sangbleu finds a couple of hundred francs about him, and M. Pistache half that sum, which is enough to give them an hour's cheap excitement, and to inspire them with philosophical musings as they walk homeward in the moonlight. Men are always philosophical when they have lost their pocket-money.

CHAPTER VII.

BOURSE DOINGS IN HIGH LIFE.

To belong to the French governing class does not simply mean eligibility to posts of emolument ; it signifies a great deal not unconnected with Bourse profits. The happy régime which collapsed at Sedan would never have commanded so much loyal service as it did if it had rewarded its devotees with mere laced coats and red ribands : it put them in the way of doing good business ; and business, according to that great man, the Duc de Morny—business is “ other people’s money.”

A great many schemes for the employment of other people’s money launched at the Bourse towards the close of the Second Empire and since the revival of the Republic down to the great crash of the Union Générale, have honourably wound up their affairs, and their promoters are enjoying the fruits of their labours. Some are in prison, others are still afraid of being sent there ; a few, who retired from the schemes at a prudent date before the winding up, are much distressed about the corruption of our times. As to those shareholders who were concerned in the schemes as nuts are concerned with nut-crackers, thousands of them are dotted about the face of France, engaged in laboriously earning money which will be at the disposal of the first new venture that springs up.

For if enterprises come to nought now and then, it is a blessing to reflect that the serenity of those who have come to nought with them is only disturbed for a brief season. Confidence in twenty per cent. is a sentiment bred in the bone of every Frenchman who has saved fivepence ; and in that well-peopled class of small annuitants who are generally termed the “ sound

part of the nation," because they pass their lives in chronic fear of the "unsound part"—namely, those who are not annuitants—in this class twenty per cent. has risen to the height of a principle.

It is all these little rentiers who encumber the pavements in sinuous processions a mile long when there is a Government loan issued. They hold coupons of Asian scrip; buy lottery tickets for a franc at the tobaccoist's; stand wistfully half a morning under the great glass roof of the Palais de l'Industrie to hear whether they have drawn one of the "gros lots" of 150,000*f.* in the municipal loans, which, somehow, they never do; and devote a large share of every day to studying the prospectuses printed on the fourth page of their newspaper. No prospectus ever appealed in vain to these honest, frugal, and greedy persons. A company has no sooner opened its offices than they surge towards it, one on the top of another, like hungry pike; and if this be the case with enterprises which have nothing on earth to recommend them but their own prospectuses abovesaid, please imagine what must have been the rush when that valuable institution, the Smoke-Jack Improvement Company, first asked for public support.

We have all of us been painfully struck by the waste of labour involved in the turning of a smoke-jack. When not busy roasting the family joint this instrument goes round in a silly sort of way, trying at once to the temper and to the utilitarian sense of the thoughtful looker-on. There is no reason why it should not employ its leisure hours in grinding the family coffee, sharpening and cleaning knives, churning butter, paring vegetables, and brushing the boots and shoes of a numerous household. All that is wanted is a collection of apparatuses adaptable, like a spit, to the jack's chain, and Monsieur Blagueferme, having invented these apparatuses, or rather bought the invention from a genius in difficulties, unquestionably did a service to humanity in issuing 10,000 shares in order that they might be brought for a cheap sum within reach of the poorest hearth.

Unfortunately, shares are not enough without a chairman, a board of directors, a secretary, and some dozen other people to look after them ; and it is essential that these people should all be weighty ones—well balanced in public repute. M. Blagueferme might have opened a shop and left his improved jacks to the judgment of enlightened customers ; but this is a weary process, bringing slow returns and some risks. The customer left to himself inquires the price of a smoke-jack, and if it works badly comes to the shop and becomes offensive, which is undesirable. M. Blagueferme, who wishes to grow quickly rich with his jacks, to buy a mansion in the Champs Elysées and an estate in the country, to purchase a marquisate in the Republic of San Marino, decorations in Spain, Greece, Turkey, and at the Vatican, to get the Legion of Honour at home, and to contest a seat in the Chamber of Deputies, either as an earnest Conservative or as a subservient Opportunist, or indeed even as a cordial advocate of Radical principles (whichever opinion may be in the ascendant)—M. Blagueferme knows that the way to ensure all this is to start hundreds of agents over the land, to have a newspaper of his own, and a great many journalists on other papers at his orders, to secure a Government contract for thousands of smoke-jacks, and to force these inventions on to the public, not only because they are invaluable in themselves, but because every man on the board of directors is at least a Count, or worthy of being one.

This plan has the additional advantage over the shop that if it breaks down M. Blagueferme will not suffer the inglorious bankruptcy of a mere tradesman. The bankruptcies, if any, would fall to the shareholders. As to M. Blagueferme, after having previously settled all his profits, goods, houses, and estates on the head of Madame Blagueferme, he would show the official assignees of the liquidating company an empty purse and a clear conscience, and remain dignified with the reputation of a man whose endeavour to improve smoke-jacks was a notable but not unpatriotic failure.

So in casting about for names to adorn the top of his pro-

spectuses, M. Blagueferme never lost sight of the fact that things were to be done on a grand scale. In Imperial times he would have run about for pushing prefects, councillors of State, courtiers in debt, and have headed the list with a senator, even if he had been obliged to sign this conscript father a bill for a million francs, payable at ninety days. But nowadays prefects have lost much of the value they formerly had, and senators—though plentiful—have ceased to have any value at all. Thus was it that in this dilemma M. Blagueferme, instead of touting around the legislators of the Republic, called boldly one morning on the pretty Marquise de Mignonnette, laid the proof-sheets of his prospectuses before her, and offered her two hundred paid-up Smoke-Jack shares, or the nominal value thereof, money down, if she would enlist him the dozen gentlemen of weight whom he wanted. It is only Gascons who have the nerve to do this sort of thing; but it should be an encouragement to others who are not Gascons—and, perhaps, it has been ere this—that the experiment when generously tried seldom fails.

Madame de Mignonnette graced the highest rung of the social ladder, M. Blagueferme adorned the lowest. Madame de Mignonnette possessed a tall footman or two who might have lifted M. Blagueferme by the collar of his coat and dropped him into the street; but then M. Blagueferme happened to know that the Marquise was living above her means, and much wished to keep this secret from M. de Mignonnette; and such an item of knowledge was as good as a lightning conductor to the Gascon. The case of the Mignonnette couple was indeed very plain, and resembled that of numerous other Royalist families, who were called after the Franco-German war to assume a social position for which they were unprepared. M. de Mignonnette, his father, and grandfather having all nobly sulked on their estates for the period of forty years between 1830 and 1870, had amassed a landed income which seemed to them large so long as they spent but a fourth of it in their provincial seclusion, but which began to feel tight when once it was made to fit the exigencies of Parisian living. M. de Mig-

nonnette was not extravagant, good soul ! but the electors of his district began by returning him to the Assembly and then to the Chamber, and his expenses first at Versailles, and afterwards in Paris far exceeded the twenty-five francs a day allowed him by a parsimonious commonwealth.

Madame de Mignonnette, on the other hand, was not lavish, but like a dutiful wife she dressed and fared diligently up to her husband's rank ; so that in a word the Mignonnette household, instead of lording it sumptuously on £1000 a year and laying by £4000 to invest in more land and in agricultural improvements, as their pious custom had been, were living up to the full and prodigal extent of their £5000 and something over. Now a freemasonry exists among Parisian tradesmen which readily allows such a man as M. Blagueferme to know how the wind lies. His friends were milliners and jewellers, glovers and perfumers, and at the club which the more prominent of these purveyors hold not a hundred leagues from the Rue Taitbout—a club where they compare notes about their customers and concert joint action against dubious payers—it was not difficult for him to ascertain what exact sums Madame de Mignonnette owed to the right and left of her. Nay, more ; for once he had resolved that Madame de Mignonnette was a lady whose name, position, and social influence were just of a kind that could promote his smoke-jacks, he very easily established on her that screw operation which consists in the visits of six or seven tradesmen together, all bearing bills with a request for part payment.

Note that these requests could have no such disastrous effect on Madame de Mignonnette as they might have had on certain ladies of the Imperial great world. One used to meet at the Tuileries and Hôtel de Ville balls little women smiling bravely under a heap of jewels which had come from the Mont de Piété in the morning, and would return thither in the course of a few hours ; and when bills came in to these little ladies, whose lives were a continual hanging on by the nails, Heaven knows what

poor shifts, what dispensing with necessities, had to be resorted to in order to meet the cost of the superfluous finery ! No, Madame de Mignonnette was not in any such straits as these ; but still debts—or rather the claims for payment of them—are unpleasant ; and Madame de Mignonnette, being an honest little woman, was ruefully fingering her bills and reflecting that she should be obliged to ask her thrifty husband to overdraw his banking account, when M. Blagueferme appeared in a pair of plum-coloured gloves, and threw his unexpected light on the situation.

Madame de Mignonnette had never seen him before, nor had he beheld her, and it may be that both were struck by each other's aspect, for the lady was fair as a summer noon and the gentleman looked like a gushing weasel. But then with what art he took a header into his subject, dashing up a spray of brilliant metaphors round those smoke-jacks of his. Long before Madame de Mignonnette could suspect that there were two hundred paid-up shares in reserve her attention was captivated by the tales of the Gascon. She thought it was a charity he was advocating, and her bright heart warmed towards these smoke-jacks, which would do the work of a housemaid, grind coffee, peel potatoes, and put a fine polish on the boots and shoes after the family veal had been roasted. But when the money question was brought up, then the business instincts which lie deep in every Frenchwoman's soul were gently stirred in Madame de Mignonnette's, and she took in the whole subject, not, indeed, at a glance, but in many glances as the Gascon's rapid explanations flashed on her like a succession of wax matches.

"See, madame," cried he, extricating all the prospectuses from his coat tails, "it means millions upon millions, just that, and nothing more. Your land yields you three per cent. ; these will fetch twenty-five."

"And then the philanthropy," put in Madame de Mignonnette, "think of all those boots and shoes !"

"After the veal has been roasted ; just so, madame ; I see you

grasp it all. Business becomes a pleasure under such conditions. We say, then, two hundred shares."

"How much are they issued at?" inquired the Marquise, sweetly.

"At 500, which makes 100,000 francs. Suppose the shares treble in a year, which is a modest supposition nowadays, you clear 300,000 francs. Then you can invest money of your own, become millionaire five times over, and build a house like Baron Rothschild's in the Faubourg St. Honoré. For my own part, I mean to do that."

• "And all you want is twelve gentlemen to put on that paper?" proceeded the Marquise, scanning the prospectus, on azure paper, glazed.

"Nothing else, a mere formality; they'll go into those blank spaces, and get a hundred free shares apiece!"

We have perhaps acted unkindly in lifting up a corner of the veil which concealed Madame de Mignonnette's milliners' bills from the eyes of M. de Mignonnette and from those of the public; but in presenting this pretty lady as one of the promoters of the famous Smoke-Jack Improvement Company, no disparagement is intended to any of her qualities as a *grande dame*. Speculation on the Bourse has simply superseded gambling at cards, and is the newest embodiment of that aleatory fire which runs in French blood from father to son and from mother to daughter. Very warmly and bravely Madame de Mignonnette's ancestresses played at quadrille, later at *bouillotte* and loo; and at all these games they were proficient, contriving to win from the gallant gentlemen who graced their punch and chocolate parties quite enough for pin-money. As high play has been banished now to the clubs—which may be said, indeed, to exist in France for the sole purpose of perpetuating whist, *écarté*, and *baccarat*—ladies, who love games of hazard, must perforce play coupons instead of aces; and, just as of yore there were ladies who dealt fairly, and others (*vide* St. Simon and Bachaumont) who had a winsome trick of always turning up trumps at critical junctures, now there are

ladies who deal out good coupons and others who deal out bad ones—which make the only difference between them.

However, we have fully explained that the Smoke-Jack Improvement Company was destined to confer blessings on humanity, and had it not been so, Madame de Mignonnette, being high-minded and charitable, would probably have taken no part in the creation of this promising concern to which we may all carry our savings if we feel so inclined. It took M. Blagueferme one hour to win Madame de Mignonnette, and Madame de Mignonnette, less than a month to convince Mesdames de Rosethé, de Réséda, and other of her friends that to pocket £2000 worth of shares is a sensible pastime in its way. And the husbands of these ladies were brought to take the same view; also a variety of brothers and cousins, noble to a man, but not the less keen in money matters. And when these trusty names had all been pasted in columns on every hoarding in the capital, what more natural than that the Government, diplomatically solicited by the promoters, should grant a contract for introducing the Improved Smoke-Jack into every state establishment where no smoke-jack, improved or otherwise, had ever been seen before?

Business is done on this method in these our times. At the last quotations the Smoke-Jack shares were rising hopefully, and both the Duc de Sangbleu and his friend, M. Pistache, had felt moved to take a few shares in them. As to M. Blagueferme, posterity will speak well of a man who, besides hastening the solution of the social problem by the diminution of servile labour, has scattered well-peeled potatoes and well-polished shoes broadcast over a smiling land.

CHAPTER VIII.

POODLE NEWSPAPERS.

THE Frenchman who has climbed to political or financial eminence proceeds to hedge himself with a newspaper, which, like a parapet, serves both to prevent him from falling and to shield him from the stones that may be flung by people below. If he can afford it, he has a newspaper to himself, and then he stands like a man in a tower ; but, generally, he imitates those of his sport-loving compatriots who club, ten together, to keep a racehorse—that is, he takes a few shares in a paper, whereon his position becomes that of a man with one or two embrasures of a rampart at his disposal.

The number of Frenchmen who are thus privileged to shoot their ideas over the world through embrasures is very considerable indeed. Nor does the French newspaper shareholder by any means look upon his connection with the press as a thing to be concealed. He attends the quarterly meetings of shareholders, and offers critical remarks as to the way in which the journal is conducted. He keeps the editor supplied with manuscript and with peppery remonstrances to know why so few of his contributions are made use of. He sends lists of the people he wishes to see attacked and others of persons—very often actresses—whom he wants to see extolled ; he would be an unhappy man if it were not known throughout his quarter that there is an organ in which he can make his displeasure felt every morning by the first post, or in the afternoon towards four o'clock, as the case may be. Let it be added that his valuable interference often ruins his newspaper ;

but as it is in this event the editor who bears the blame, he himself walks off with his capital to buy shares elsewhere.

So there are papers with a hundred shareholders and papers with ten, papers to promote men and papers to promote measures ; but the pleasantest of all these is the by no means rare journal behind which nestles a little brood of *grand monde* politicians who are managed by their wives, these ladies also indirectly managing the paper. Of such sort is the newly founded *Ori flamme*. In describing the operations of M. Blagueferme for starting the Smoke-Jack Improvement Company, it was hinted that this gentleman would probably find it necessary to bring out a newspaper, the better to impress his smoke-jacks on the public ; and he has found it necessary, or at all events expedient so to do. He has brought out the *Ori flamme* for the advocacy of smoke-jacks and Conservative principles, and his backers in this venture, as in the other, are MM. de Mignonnette, de Rosethé, and de Réséda, who sit on the President's extreme right in the Chamber of Deputies ; M. de Sangbleu, who, let us hope, will soon sit with them ; M. Pistache, and, above all, the wives of the three first-named gentlemen.

A paper so backed must of necessity be elevated in thought and refined in tone, and both these essentials have been compassed by entrusting the editorship to M. de Postiche, a particular friend of M. Pistache, an elegant and elevated writer, who believes his forefathers accompanied Richard Cœur-de-Lion to the Crusades, though some brother-pennmen of the baser sort have asserted that this accompaniment was simply performed towards the opera of "Richard," and on the flute. However that may be, M. de Postiche has understood with a ready wit what was required of him, and he has commenced the most spirited crusade on his own account in favour of the smoke-jacks, and of his three fairest patronesses, their husbands, and protégés.

Not a day passes but Paris learns through the *Ori flamme* how the ladies were dressed at their last dinner-party, what they said, nay, what they ate, and how they liked it. Madame de Mignonnette's blue eyes and small hands, Madame de Réséda's superb teeth and

lips, Madame de Rosethé's superlative manner of wearing her ruff *à la Medicis*—all these points are gushingly enumerated as were of yore the perfections of Mesdames de Metternich, de Gallifet, and de Pourtales, dubbed the Three Graces, under the Second Empire. And, thanks to the *Ori flame*, Madame de Mignonnette and her friends will come to be known as the Three Graces of more recent days—graces in mind as well as person, for has not M. de Postiche a dictionary of anecdotes, and does he not daily cull from it some ornate saying of Madame de Longueville's, Madame du Deffand's, or Madame de Staël's, and dress it up in modern garb, attributing the said smart things to one of the ladies turn by turn?

But at the same time, intent on graver concerns, he takes care that the wise speeches of M. de Mignonnette, the keen lobby jests of M. de Réséda, and the learned treatises which M. de Rosethé has written on the threatened supersession of beetroot by mangel-wurzels in sugar factories, shall be known and admired wherever the French tongue is spoken; and it is by such helps as these that little men often rise to be big stars in the political or literary firmament. For who has not met in French society—be it Royalist or Republican—some dull affable man who has not much to say for himself till supper-time, but who is one morning unexpectedly gazetted a minister? Now what whirlwind has passed over this dull man and blown him into the Cabinet? is it a sudden blast of genius?—no, nothing but a series of newspaper articles on his treatise about beetroots and mangel-wurzels, articles which have swelled him out to three times his natural size and made him buoyant.

Say the Ministership of Agriculture and Commerce was vacant. It was clearly impossible to appoint to this post any well-known *savant*, for the jealousy of brother *savants* might have been aroused, besides which erudite men have crotchets and never work well in harness. On the other hand, how select a trenchant politician whose appointment might have a significance, and make the agricultural and commercial interests restless at a time, when appeasement was needed? So the Premier sets eyes on the

dull man whom the newspapers have puffed; and this new Minister ceases to be dull now that he has patronage and public moneys at his disposal. Far from being dull, he gives no trouble to the Premier, but speaks as he is bidden; he prints five or six new editions of his mangel-wurzel treatises at the State expense, and forwards them to the Chambers of Commerce, who thank him in deputations; by-and-by he comes forward as candidate to the Academy of Sciences, where he is elected with enthusiasm, and he ends by leaving a reputation as a statesman, if not in history, at all events on his own tombstone.

Now, these are the works of newspapers, such as Madame de Mignonnette and her fair friends patronize—in view of a possible Restoration, or say, perhaps, a Conservative reaction—touting bravely for subscriptions among all the persons on their visiting lists. A man cannot well help taking an *abonnement* to a journal when he is warmly advised to do so by ladies whom he esteems, and there are men who subscribe to some half-dozen papers right and left, so as not to wound the feelings of the feminine shareholders. Good humour, good writing, and special information—not always accurate, but sensational—do the rest towards speeding the paper's fortunes; and it is a pleasure to announce that the *Oriflamme* is already a success.

A journal which is wafted aloft like this by the flutter of ladies' fans is in Parisian language called a poodle-newspaper. Every one knows that the poodle is a docile and clever dog, but it would be uncandid to pretend that even when petted by great ladies and led along with a string like M. de Postiche, the poodle's life is free from troubles. The winds nip him now and then like the rest of us, and the poodle *Oriflamme* in particular lately met with a disagreeable adventure which it is worth while to chronicle.

It arose, of course, from a ladies' quarrel. Mesdames de Mignonnette, de Réséda, and de Roséthé, ruling over the Faubourg St. Germain, feel a natural and most justifiable antipathy for the nobility of the new quarters—the Second Empire nobility—and the feeling is all the keener as it has to be concealed at times

under a semblance of outward friendship. Politics having drawn the husbands, Royalist and Imperialist, together, for a season, the wives were obliged to sororize, and it thus chanced that Madame de Sabretache, a Chaussée d'Antin beauty, was drawn into the acquaintanceship of the above-named ladies, and proceeded to make herself sweetly popular by dressing against them, outshining them in her carriages at the Bois, and attracting more male worship than they. To make matters more balmy she had two friends, Mesdames de Pomponnette and de Lestincelle, who followed her lead, and this trio, opposed to the triad of Legitimist ladies, waged one of those silent, implacable, and smiling wars of which the public at large see nothing, but of which the husbands meekly pay the cost at Christmas time in the shape of milliners' bills.

When the war had raged for some months with fatal losses of temper on both sides and divers boudoir explosions—of which the husbands again bore the chief brunt—then Madame de Sabretache and her friends, feeling they had now conquered a secure footing in the affections of Mesdames de Mignonnette, Réséda, and Rosethé made a charge for the last stronghold of the noble Faubourg, that highly Catholic “Œuvre des Chauves,” of which mention has been previously made. To belong to the “Œuvre des Chauves,” as a lady patroness is, indeed, one of those high patents of social distinction which ladies covet as gentlemen do red ribands; and in canvassing for admission to this charity Madame de Sabretache and friends paid the finest homage they could to its illustrious prestige. Need it be said how cordially they obtained promises of support and kisses to seal these pledges? Each of the twelve ladies on the committee, canvassed separately, declared with effusion that it would be the joy of her life to see the number of patronesses raised to fifteen; but unfortunately when they were all twelve gathered together round the ballot-boxes a painful thing occurred, for together with the names of the three Bonapartist beauties came out thirty-six black balls.

Accidents like this may happen in the best-regulated charities, but when they become known to the candidates they are apt to promote unpleasantness. Mesdames de Sabretache, de Pomponette, and de Lestincelle, who had not counted on such a rebuff, swept their skirts grandly out of the Faubourg St. Germain, and forthwith there began a new war, ten times more bitter than the last—more ravageful and more noisy, for this time the weapons were newspaper squibs.

The Chaussée d'Antin has poodle-newspapers as well as other districts of the city, and no one is ignorant that the *Abeille*, edited by M. de Piquedur, is a stinging news-sheet as devoted to the Sabretache clique as the *Oriflamme* is to the Mignonnette bevy. How describe what notable paragraphs began to whistle every afternoon from the *Abeille* office to that of the *Oriflamme* like barbed arrows? Paris, which harbours an acute population, was not long in guessing who were Mesdames X., Y., and Z., at whom the *Abeille* levelled its cruel punctures every afternoon, or who were Mesdames A., B., and C., whom the *Oriflamme* covered with the Greek fire of flaming ridicule. Neither M. de Piquedur nor M. de Postiche were new to their work, and never did knight-errants ply their weapons more doughtily for a cause they loved. But one day impartial spectators began to note that poor M. de Postiche was getting the worst of it. He did his best, but his adversary was the stronger man. The *Abeille's* pricks were deeper, stuck faster, rankled with infinitely more soreness than the stabs of the *Oriflamme*; and M. de Postiche was on the point of filling that humiliating position of a jousting beaten in the lists when one day he picked up heart and launched out into a sortie which drove back M. de Piquedur with astonished howls and maledictions.

Who had supplied him with the materials for those delicate family revelations which he began to print, not *en toutes lettres*, but in a style transparent to all the elect who can read between newspaper lines, and with a breezy humour that set every drawing-room in the *grand monde* on the titter? Who indeed? There

is no guessing, for M. de Postiche is a discreet scribe, who can hold his peace when it suits him. But if you ask how it comes that M. de Postiche is occupying Cell No. 1,000 at the prison of Ste. Pelagie, where jellies, champagne, and choice fruits are brought to him every day in coronetted broughams, know that this elegant editor closed his battle with M. de Piquedur by a single combat in the Bois de Vincennes with foils.

M. de Postiche was wounded and sentenced to a month's imprisonment, while his vanquisher got three months, and is now occupying Cell No. 1,001, where he too is supplied with jellies, champagne, and the rest of it. It is said the foes get on well together when there is nobody to see them ; but the ladies on either side are piously persuaded of the contrary, and are only waiting for the liberation of the combatants to set the two poodle newspapers at each other again with redoubled fury. In literature, as in other things, women's influence is always soothing.

CHAPTER IX.

THEATRICAL INFLUENCE.

ONE must not underrate the influence of the stage on the formation of French character ; it is an influence which, in Paris at least, has well-nigh superseded all others. The talk of an ordinary Parisian, his views about the world and about himself, the code of honour which he carries about, like a sword-stick, rather for the admiration of his friends than for real use, and, above all, his tricks of attitude, sentiment, and declamation, would occasionally be puzzling if one did not remember that the man belongs to a nation of born mimics, and may be just fresh from seeing a piece which has struck him at the Français or the Gymnase.

* Formerly novels had something to do with training the national mind, and Balzac could pride himself that the Rastignacs, Rubemprés, and La Paléstrines whom he had sketched on paper found countless living disciples among the soldier youth of the country. But Balzac's pen was buried with him ; and the novels of these times teach nothing—or, at least, nothing worthy of being learned. As to newspapers, whatever they may do in the way of stuffing the provincial intellect with heated common-places, their influence on cool and wary Parisians is null.

To the Parisian the one school of manners is the stage. Society teems with men—young, old, and middle-aged—who are copies, more or less studied, of the leading artistes of the two theatres we have mentioned above ; and these actors may, therefore, better claim to rank in the Public Education Department than the numerous professors who lecture at the Collège de France before

empty benches. It must be understood that these remarks do not apply—or apply only in a less degree—to Frenchmen who have been trained religiously, and who continue *pratiquants* after they have attained manhood. These few exemplary people live in subjection to divers ritual ordinances and to their confessors; but they are very scarce, in Paris almost obsolete, and the average Parisian, who has left off going to church since he was at school, and has not mind or knowledge enough to grow himself a new religion, code of ethics, or system of philosophy out of the doctrines of ancient and modern free-thinkers, is necessarily attracted to the theatre by the impulse which drives us all to look somewhere for guides to our conduct.

It follows that if you see a young Frenchman dressed in preternaturally black clothes, and looking many shades more melancholy than he has any reason to be, you need not feel over-anxious about him, for he has simply witnessed a performance of *Le Roman d'un jeune Homme pauvre* at a time when his finances were low. He speaks with a sweet, low solemnity about his poverty; and if he were on the towers of Notre Dame he would be just the man to threaten jumping off the parapet—he would not quite jump off, for imitation must have its limits—in order to reassure any lady present as to the honourable nature of his intentions. Look again at the chivalrous young man who has learned from Raoul de Presle, in the *Gendre de M. Poirier*, that if he flings his substance out of the window and most of his character along with it, he has only to marry the daughter of a retired grocer and everything will come straight, especially if he wears a rose in his button-hole as M. Bressant used to do, and addresses his father-in-law with grandiloquent contempt. Or, if a grocer's daughter be not available, what is simpler than to do as the hero of that other highly moral comedy, *Un Fils de Famille*, that is, abscond from home and enlist in the lancers, spend the day with champagne bottles, put on plain clothes to fight a duel with one's colonel, and be restored to the affections of one's family by marrying a lovely millionaire widow, who buys her

bridegroom his discharge? We know that these things happen daily in the lancers, where life is pleasant; for the *Fils de Famille* does no drill and the trumpet never calls him to stables once in the three acts.

So much for young men; but the examples inculcated upon men of graver years are not less salutary. In M. Dumas's *Monsieur Alphonse*, when Captain Montaignin discovers that his wife gave birth to a daughter several years before her marriage, does he storm at this bit of news, stamp about, or talk of separation? Not he. "My only regret," says this good husband to his wife's seducer, "is that you should not have two daughters to bring me." Touching and commendable resignation! Bishop Myriel never spoke better in the *Misérables*, when he said: "You committed no theft in taking those silver spoons, my friend. Heaven intended them for you as much as for me."

The above is a preface to stating that now-a-days the votaries of High Life make a point of attending the Théâtre Français once or twice a week—on Tuesdays and Thursdays—the former being, of the two, the grander subscription night. The Orleans Princes set the fashion, and it is a very good one, for the "House of Molière," as it is called, has traditions of its own in the way of acting, and is supposed to be the perfect academy of fine language and posturing. Thus the archives, which fill three strong-rooms, record how every actor from the time of Molière wore his garters in the *Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, and even tell us that M. Mounet-Sully brandished his cane not in his right hand but in his left, when he cursed the profligacy of Paris in the last act of *Jean de Thommeray*, a few years ago. These things are worth knowing, and the actors of the Français are indeed so imbued with the importance of them that when M. Lafontaine—reputed one of the best of French tragedians—declined holding up his toga as M. Talma had done, he created an amount of bitterness which resulted in his retirement.

Another tradition of the Français is to allow the chief actress of the company to wield power which makes her sovereign. Mes-

demoiselles Adrienne Lecouvreur, De Raucourt, Clairon, Bourgoing, Mars, and Rachel successively exercised a queenship over the public, their brother and sister performers, and the managers, whom the State appointed and who took care to be obedient to the queens. By-and-by the sceptre was transferred to the hands of that excellent actress, Madame Favart, and just as Mademoiselle Rachel and her predecessors had forbidden the engagement of any ladies who were personally distasteful to them, so Madame Favart kept such artistes as Mesdames Desclée, Delaporte, and Pasca, all favourites of the people, away from the Comédie Française.

But all reigns have a finish, and Madame Favart had to abdicate at the advent of Sarah Bernhardt. Guided in her turn by professional jealousy this great but eccentric actress prevented Mademoiselle Agar from returning to the stage of her early successes, and opposed her veto to the engagement of Mademoiselle Rousseil—perhaps her greatest living rival. Now-a-days Mademoiselle Bartet, who plays so brilliantly the youthful heroines of modern comedy, has grasped the sceptre which Sarah Bernhardt abandoned on the occasion of her famous *fugue*, but the Français sorely lacks a great tragic actress.

Despite the warfare which goes on—now openly and now covertly—among the artistes, the Théâtre Français is a first-rate playhouse, and if such little pieces as *Le Cheveu Blanc*, which should be played by actresses of twenty-five, are generally performed by ladies nearly double that age, the taxpayers who disburse 10,000 francs a year for the support of “Molière’s House” have at least the consolation of knowing that they have witnessed high art according to the most conservative principles; besides which, if they are unhappy at the age of the actresses, they have only to shut their eyes and content themselves with the diction, which is faultless. But wholesome and refining as may be the lessons conveyed by the stage of the Français, the “Foyer des Artistes,” or green-room of that famous house operates not less beneficially on the tongues and manners of the *grand monde*. This accounts

for the exclusiveness of the company, for the Français is in some sense a club. To admit actors and actresses from other houses indiscriminately, simply because they happen to be eminent, might improve the cast of the plays no doubt, and give the spectator much extra emotion for his money ; but what would become of the green-room if the new actresses introduced the light mode of speech habitual to the Boulevards, nay, slang and unseemly levity ?

This cannot be. The green-room is a sanctum to which admittance can only be obtained by those who have some status in life ; and these privileged persons must be assured of finding the unimpeachable grammar and general polish which prevailed—or are reported to have prevailed—in noble drawing-rooms a hundred years ago. The Français prefers recruiting its company from performers caught young at the Conservatoire, and trained by slow stages to the customs of the house. After a term of years the probationers become sociétaires, and are entitled to a fixed share of the net profits over and above their salaries and to a retiring pension ; then they get to look upon “ Molière’s House ” as their own private property, and upon the “ Foyer ” as their holy of holies ; and that is just what is wanted.

So if we take it that the Duc de Saugbleu has come with his friend M. Pistache to see the new piece of the season, we may suppose the friends leaving their box between the fourth and fifth acts to pay Madame de Rosethé a visit in hers ; and then this lady confides to the Duke that she burns to visit the “ Foyer.” She hopes it is not naughty, but she has heard so much about the renowned saloon, and so has her friend, the Comtesse Réséda, who sits with her, that they both long to see whether the place is really like a drawing-room in the “ *Monde*.” The Duke assures the ladies it is not naughty. He has visited the “ Foyer ” himself, and saw nothing there which could keep a lady away, but he believes one must ask leave of the manager ; saying which he draws forth one of his cards and writes the usual form of request : —“ Madame la Marquise de Rosethé et Madame la Comtesse

Réséda demandent aux dames de la Comédie Française la permission de leur rendre visite."

This petition, conveyed by the box-keeper, quickly brings up M. Perrin in person, and just as the curtain rises on the last act the ladies and their cavaliers follow the courteous manager through the public "Foyer" with its grinning statue of Voltaire, along the gallery peopled with the busts of illustrious playwrights, and so through a private door, down a staircase warmly carpeted, into the slips. Two footmen stand here, gorgeous in plush and powder, and one of their duties consists in requesting forgetful or unmannerly strangers to remove their hats, even when the strangers may be standing in the double draughts of shifted scenes. But the Duke and M. Pistache are too familiar with the ways of the house to need any such reminder. Barchheaded they pass behind the troop of supers, and turn down the passage where the young actor Seveste was carried, bleeding from a mortal wound received at Montretout, to his death-bed in that very "Foyer" they are going to visit.

Mademoiselle Bartet, we may take it, is on the stage, and so the Duke and his convoy turn to Mademoiselle Madeleine Brohan, the senior lady sociétaire, and the most witty and amiable of stage-dowagers. Of the two famous sisters she alone remains "on active service," for masculine-minded Augustine Brohan, who used to sport a man's eye-glass, has retired with a handsome pension, and resides on an estate of her own, "*à la campagne.*" Perceiving her visitors Mademoiselle Madeleine Brohan gracefully rises from her seat, and goes through a grand courtesy of welcome. Now, nothing puts a *grande dame* of the world more thoroughly on her mettle than the presence of a *grande dame* of the stage; and be sure that the hearts and pulses of Mesdames de Rosethé and Réséda are beating a quick march as they return the courtesy, first to Mademoiselle Brohan, then to Mademoiselle Suzanne Reichemberg, the leading "*ingénue*," and then to dainty and delicate Mademoiselle Baretta, who plays in the same line.

The "Foyer" is an imposing room, adorned with old portraits

of actors and actresses dead scores of years ago, and furnished with chairs and sofas of the Louis XV. style. Mademoiselle Jouassain, who personates comic old women, is working at some tapestry near the fire. M. Got, the Triboulet of *Le Roi S'Amuse*, with the ribbon of the Legion of Honour in his button-hole, sits playing chess with M. Legouvé of the Academy, whose hobby it is to teach young France how to read aloud, and who spends most of his evenings here telling stories, at times, of Mademoiselle Mars and Talma, the friends of his earlier days. The brothers Coquelin are talking politics, as is their wont. M. Maubant, who plays the kings of lordly tragedy, M. Worms, the courtly knight, and M. Mounet Sully, the fiery hero of impassioned drama, make up a group. That excellent actor of modern parts, M. Febvre, is also here, chatting with M. Emile Augier, whose bald head and bearded face are not unlike what Victor Hugo's were when the latter was younger. And now examine that young man, who preserves an attitude of such consummate grace and whose dress coat, adorned with the red ribbon of the Legion of Honour, is as faultless as the Duc de Sangbleu's. That, if you please, is M. Delaunay, the perfect lover, who has discovered the secret of sempiternal youth. He is fast getting into the sixties, no doubt, and yet he is as fresh looking as ever, and his voice has still the same beautiful silvery tone as five and thirty years ago.

In a word, the room is gaily crowded, and it has much the effect of a royal entry to see every one rise whilst Mesdames de Rosethé and Réséda, inwardly nervous but outwardly majestic, glide towards chairs of honour near the mantelshelf. They must have felt splendidly sure of themselves before embarking on this venture. Throughout the ten minutes' conversation which follows they have the satisfaction of feeling that if any slip of their tongues betrayed them into a solecism, or if anything in their attire could be fastened on as a fault of taste, there would be demure sarcasm in that green-room for many an evening afterwards. All the private chattings have been hushed too, the chess-playing, tapestry work, and gallant complimenting have

ceased, and the ladies have to bear the whole brunt of a conversation which Mesdames Brohan, Reichenberg, and Bartet—who has now swept in from the stage, attired in one of those faultless dresses she knows so well how to wear—are not likely to let languish for a single second.

But what are ladies remarkable for, if not for intrepidity? M. Pistache may feel—and he does feel—that if left alone with a dozen actors and actresses, and compelled to prove his wit to them, he would collapse. As it is, his head experiences a certain numb sensation as if it had been sapped of all its contents. But not so M. de Sangblen, who is aware that MM. Delannay and Worms are watching him with eyes and ears on the strain to see if a young Duke now-a-days knows how to demean himself in good company. So he remains cool, smiles, and braves it out, as if he were in the field, and each of the actors' eyes were a pair of rifle barrels. It is a pretty scene of High Life comedy, but perhaps every one is more or less pleased when the summoning of various performers to the stage furnishes an excuse for bringing the interview to an end. The ladies have stood their ground valiantly, and so have the actresses. Madame de Rosethé has learned from Mademoiselle Madeleine Brohan how a fan should be fluttered; and Mademoiselle Bartet has perceived that Madame de Réséda's dress is as harmonious in all its component parts as a verse of Racine's. There have been no solecisms either, no slips of the tongue, nothing but orthodox civilities, with a few pleasanties thrown in for seasoning; and everybody has cause to be satisfied. Once again those grand courtesies come into play, and a graceful dialogue of parting is enacted on the "Foyer's" threshold:

"Mesdames, nous sommes venus chez vous prendre une leçon de bon goût."

"Mesdames, c'est nous qui vous prendrons désormais pour modèles."

But amid all this M. Pistache has been observing how M. Delannay takes a chair, and he has noticed that that apparently

simple action requires, to be fittingly performed, three movements as distinct as drill exercises. When he gets home he plants a chair opposite his cheval-glass, lights six wax candles, dismisses his valet Aristide to bed, and then, in the stillness of the small hours, may be heard flitting over his carpet and repeating to himself in attentive tones, "One, two, three."

CHAPTER X.

A PLEASURE EXCURSION.

A GREAT lady of the seventeenth century being stricken with *ennui* one day, her husband and some friends present suggested a morning with the hawks. But she was in no humour for hawks. A ride, then, with a little tilting at rings or at the quintain? No; these diversions were stale. A game of bowls or bilboquet then, a deal of cards, a spell of backgammon? "Non, messieurs," at last said the lady, with impatience, "*je n'aime pas les plaisirs innocents.*"

Tastes have improved since then, and when modern French ladies of the world are heard arranging a "*partie de plaisir*," one may be sure the programme will be wholly, and indeed naïvely, innocent. Balls, crushes, dinners, academic speeches, the opera, and exhibitions of all sorts—these are not pleasures, but a round of duties in which ladies, after the first novelty of them has worn off, take no more real delight than soldiers do in a review. But a "*partie de plaisir*" is a day's holiday which breaks in upon the monotony of social obligations with a wondrous freshness; it is a piece of truancy to be remembered with cheerfulness and emotion through many a dull day succeeding.

In spring the thing to do is to go to the Petit Trianon and pass a morning in poor Marie Antoinette's model park, with its quaint dairy, cow-house, and presbytery; then hark back to St. Germain's in a *char-à-bancs* or four-in-hand, dine at the Pavillon Henri Quatre, and drive home to Paris in the moonlight—the almanack having been consulted beforehand for this purpose. On another day a breakfast in the branches of "Robinson's oak" at Sceaux should

begin the amusement, and a visit to St. Cloud, with return down the river by moonlight as before, should end it. This moonlight is essential, for where no moon is, there are no giant shadows of trees, no silver ripples in the water, and no poetizing.

In the winter, however, no plan for a happy day is quite complete unless it embrace one or all of the following features :—
 1. A trip down the sewers, with the Director of Municipal Works for one's guide. 2. A nice, flesh-creeping stroll through the Catacombs. 3. A *séance* at a spiritualist's or a fortune-teller's. 4. Luncheon and dinner at a restaurant ; and, 5, a couple of hours in a *loge grillée* at some popular theatre renowned for farces or melodramas—total, sixteen hours away from home, with no trouble of dressing, and pure excitement from first to last.

Such is the manner of holiday which our acquaintances the Three Graces of the Faubourg St. Germain have resolved to give themselves with M. de Sangbleu, M. Pistache, and M. de Muguet (the last-named, a nephew of the Marquis de Rosethé, on leave from the hussar regiment he belongs to), acting as their cavaliers. They have been looking forward to the enjoyment for days and days, and if a snowstorm occurred on the appointed morning, the ladies would almost cry from disappointment. But luckily everything works propitiously, and there is a bright sun and clear sky. Courteous M. Alphand, the man of magic, who for twenty years has been rebuilding, embellishing, and polishing Paris, has placed himself at the service of the party, unbeknown, perhaps, to the Radical Municipal Council ; and truly there are no six-gladder people in the capital than those whom a waggonette conveys to the Place de la Madeleine under the escort of the distinguished Director of Works, and lands near an iron plate in the pavement close to the flower market. This plate is a door and leads to the sewers.

Let no one be flurried at the word, for the sewers of Paris are among the finest and sweetest in the world, and no wonder if the Three Graces, impelled, of course, by enthusiasm for the marvels of science, are anxious to visit them. A man in a flannel shirt and

rusty boots reaching to his thighs, lifts the door, and the party descend a staircase, not too steep, and find themselves on a platform under a tunnel much like those of the underground railway in London. There is nothing to see at first but the enamelled bricks of the vault, glaring clean as porcelain in the gaslight, and a tram-car like a third-class railway carriage, into which the party are requested to mount, and in which they are borne at a slow pace, under the rumble of the streets above, as far as the Place du Châtelet.

So far there is really nothing to inspire terror, and the ladies, who had taken every precaution possible in the way of salts in gold-capped smelling-bottles, and who, besides, had judged it necessary to turn pale on reaching the platform, find now that science is a smooth decent thing after all. The tram-car is drawn by a contrivance of ropes, and of a sewer nothing is visible but a canal of rapid, eddying waters which flows along the tram-quay, and which the party not unnaturally take for a subterraneous branch of the Seine. It is as though a pleasing illusion had been snatched from them when they learn that this canal is the sewer, and that the shoals of rats they had hoped to see (from afar, and safely protected), the mounds of silver spoons dropped into the drains by hunted thieves, the instruments of burglary got rid of by the same means, and perhaps—who knows?—a very burglar in the flesh being pursued like Victor Hugo's Jean Valjean through underground Paris, and baffling the ardour of his persecutors, are all pictures that must be expunged from their fancy.

However, hope revives for a space when the party are transferred from the tram into a punt, and are paddled under a vaulting, along the narrow pavements of which booted scavengers are flitting like ghosts, with huge besoms in their hands. If M. Maxime Ducamp, the historiographer of Paris, were with the party, or if M. Alphand were as communicative as he might be, the ladies would learn with more surprise than pleasure that after the boots of these scavengers have been worn six months, and are seemingly good for nothi but to be cast into a flaming furnace, they begin

a new and glorious career in the shops of fashionable bootmakers. The leather being thick at starting, the outward rusting they undergo seasons them, and they have only to be scraped, cleaned, and chemicalized in some way to afford the finest leather known in the shoe-trade for durable ladies' boots. But this useful wrinkle of knowledge is only confided to gentlemen, and in the way of startling news the ladies learn nothing but this, that if a thunderstorm were to break out overhead, the vault under which they are gliding might be filled with rain-water in five minutes.

"And do you mean we should be drowned?" asks Madame de Rosethé, with a slight lump in her throat.

"Quite drowned, all of us," answers M. Alphand, cheerfully; "but there are no thunderstorms in winter, and we don't risk these adventures in rainy weather." Saying which, he points to shafts hollowed fifty feet apart on either side of the canal and provided with iron clamps to afford the scavengers a ready escape into the streets at the first approach of danger.

It is fair to state that this explanation operates as just the slightest damper on the general feeling of pleasantness, but happily the end is near. Shooting like a dull fish over the waters, the punt reaches a landing stage near a floodgate, and lo! at a signal from M. Alphand, this floodgate is closed; and, the contrary currents being thus checked, thousands upon thousands of corks rise to the surface, bob about and jostle one another. One can see nothing but corks, for these light things act as a cloak to the innumerable other waifs beneath; and before the party have had full time to guess where such an imposing array of corks can have come from, the floodgate is opened anew, the corks duck under and are whirled off to their new destinies—that is, to be fished up in the wire nets near the sewer's outlet, to be sold by the myriad, and to be transformed from their late condition of champagne, beer, and claret corks into those coquettish stoppers used by perfumers and chemists.

"So nothing is lost," remarks the Director of Municipal Works, as the party, much edified by what they have seen and somewhat

relieved that it is all over, emerges into the open day again somewhere near the Place de la Bastille ; whereat M. Pistache adds to poetical Madame de Réséda as he assists her into the waggonette, "No one need despair of better days. The champagne cork which flies down the sewer may well moan that its hours of glory are over ; but after its brief purgatory it rises again on the top of a bottle of Jockey Club scent."

This comforting philosophy forms the most fitting of preludes to a walk through the Catacombs, which are entered at the Barrière d'Enfer—gloomy but appropriate name ! As every one knows, the Catacombs are disused stone quarries which have been adorned, in true French taste, with the skulls and bones of all the skeletons dug up from the city churchyards closed at the Revolution. The Innocents' Cemetery, which stood where the central markets now are, and which was the principal burying-place of Paris during four centuries, contributed nearly 3,000,000 skeletons, and the victims beheaded under the Terror supplied a smaller but not less interesting contingent. The skulls are most artistically embedded in the walls—here in pyramidal patterns, ten at the base and one at the apex ; there in lozenges ; farther on in ovals with a picturesque framework of shin-bones ; and in some places the shapely devices take the forms of crosses and stars. Wherever identification was possible brass plates have been inserted to record the names once borne by these ornamental relics ; and a Frenchman has only to ramble through the Catacombs to feel that he belongs not only to an artistic but to a thoughtful and considerate people.

Each of the persons in the present party has been furnished with an iron candlestick and tallow dip, and they have been adjured not to get apart from one another—which they would not have been tempted to do in any case—for there is a legend of an Englishman who insisted on doing the Catacombs alone, and who, having outpaced his guide, was found twenty-four hours afterwards under the Pantheon, more dead than alive in every sense, for he fancied himself a skeleton. To five persons in the

party the Catacombs have only the fascination of curiosity. Being of noble blood, they are naturally acquainted with the sites where their ancestors were buried ever since the world began ; but M. Pistache, who springs of plebeian stock, has the emotion of feeling that any one of those skulls which are ogling him may have sat on the shoulders of his great-grandfather, whom he happens to know plied an honest grocery business near the Innocent's quarter. Is it this which stamps a slight hue of melancholy on the gallant young Frenchman's brow ? Anyhow, he has not much appetite for the luncheon which is partaken of near the Luxembourg, and the sadness has not quite left him all the afternoon, when the party turn to the third item in their "partie de plaisir"—a visit to Baron Frapp, the spiritualist medium.

Who made M. Frapp a Baron, and by what secret treaty with the evil one he came to acquire his power over chairs and tables, are mysteries which no one has ventured to fathom ; but he is much run after, and not the less so as his feminine visitors are persuaded there is something sulphurous about the man, and never fail to do penance by their confessors' orders for having visited him. However, supernatural attractions are not to be withstood, even at the risk of penance. Long before the Empress Josephine had set the example of consulting the sibyl of the Rue de Tournon, Mademoiselle Lenormand, and long before another august lady in more recent times had shown her keen interest in spiritualism, French ladies of the *grand monde* had loved the fortune-teller's craft ; and time has but developed this love, as the sixty-five fortune-tellers who advertise in Bottin's Paris Directory can avouch.

But Baron Frapp is not a vulgar fortune-teller, for these persons claim fixed fees, whereas the Baron leaves everything to the generosity of his visitors—which is very different, for he earns twice as much as he would under the other arrangement. He has five rooms, and is himself a well-dressed, presentable man. If the ladies expected cavernous chambers and a seer with hair

down his shoulders, they must be as disappointed as they were a few hours before in the sewers ; on the other hand, they are thrilled as much as they can desire when, courteous preliminaries being over, they find themselves seated round a mahogany table, while Baron Frapp proceeds to close the shutters, draw the curtains, and otherwise darken the room.

This is unearthly. "I am sure I shall scream," falters Madame de Mignonnette, putting out her hand to feel that she is protected on her right by the Duc de Sangblen and on her left by M. Pistache.

"Is it really necessary to darken the room ?" asks Madame de Roséthé faintly, and putting out her hand similarly to feel for her relative, the hussar.

"Quite necessary, for the spirits dread the light," is the Baron's reassuring answer. •

"Well, but how shall we see to write on these slips of paper ?" inquires M. Pistache, alluding to the sheet of foolscap and the pencil with which everybody has been furnished ; but he obtains no distinct reply, for the Baron has somehow crawled back to his chair in the dark, and having given the command, "All hands on the table," is asking solemnly, "Are there any spirits in this room ?"

Judge of M. Pistache's feelings when from right under his nose, as it were, comes up a series of ghostly raps on the mahogany ! He is a peaceable man is M. Pistache, who has never dabbled before in the works of darkness, and that visit to the Catacombs has so far unnerved him that a few beads pearl on his forehead at the thought that this rapping spirit may be his great-grandfather's. To appease all anxieties on this head, let it be stated that the spirit is only that of Plutarch, who, with the affability for which he was noted both in Bœotia and at Rome eighteen centuries ago, consents to answer any questions that may be put to him. •

The manner of questioning is as follows : each person writes his or her question on the foolscap, numbers the page, and passes

it on to Baron Frapp. The Baron then calls out the numbers by turn, and evokes the replies by means of an alphabet—the spirit giving a rap to every separate letter which is required to form the answer. That the spirit is indeed that of Plutarch and not that of any unprincipled pretender may be gathered from the far-sighted and satisfactory nature of the responses rapped out to each query. Thus M. de Sangbleu has asked, “Shall I be returned to the Assembly?” and the reply is, “Yes, by a large majority.” Madame de Réséda has inquired, “Will M. de Sangbleu marry my young cousin Bertha?” to which Plutarch has replied, “Yes, very shortly; and with pleasure.” As to M. Pistache, his interrogation was, “Did I see the skulls of any of my family this morning, and are they offended with me?” And to this Plutarch has replied, “You did see the skulls of your family, but they freely forgive you.”

To say that both ladies and gentlemen are quite pale when they leave Baron Frapp's house would be a colourless term, for they are all wonder-stricken, and even that valorous young officer M. de Muguet is abashed. Each has, of course, kept his or her particular question secret, but that only makes the onus of it more oppressive. There are some who may contend that Baron Frapp had a secret trap under his foot through which, under cover of the darkness, he passed down the foolscap to a confederate in a lower room, who took the trouble to knock back the answers in Plutarch's name. But the Three Graces and their cavaliers would reject this explanation as profane; and so do we.

It is not until several hours later, after a dinner at the Café Anglais and a few hours spent at a boulevard theatre, seeing a new spectacular extravaganza, that the effects of Baron Frapp's magic are finally dispelled. But they are not dispelled in the case of M. Pistache, for, as ill-luck will have it, one of the scenes of the extravaganza is laid in the lower world, so that this “partie de plaisir” will bear evermore in M. Pistache's brain the impress of the diabolical.

CHAPTER XI.

DUELLING AND CARNIVAL.

A FRENCHMAN of fashion does not much care to reach the age of thirty without having "made his proofs"; that is, without having fought somebody. If he be of a temper naturally amiable, he will best consult his own interests by getting three duels comfortably over before his twenty-fifth year; then he can practise amiability for the rest of his days without being open to misconstruction. Of course, in the case of Olympian young gentlemen like the Duc de Sangbleu this rule suffers exception, for, in the first place, a Duke is everywhere treated with the deference he deserves, and, in the second place, should he not be so treated, he may resent the first symptoms of impertinence with a cold stare, which will freeze the insulter's tongue to his palate, recalling him to a sense of social differences. In fact, if a Duke has a duel it is one of his own choosing—except, indeed, he patronizes the turf, in which event he will have temporarily exchanged his coronet for a jockey cap, and must bear the rubs of Longchamps and Chantilly as he finds them.

But take the case of a man like M. Pistache, who has nothing Olympian about him, and whose cold stares might not produce all the effect desired. It is not enough that people should be able to say in answer to the inquiry, "Who is M. Pistache?" "M. Pistache is that young man with a black head and buff gloves; he sits on the Committee for Encouraging Woodcocks, and leads a cotillon now and then with rare spirit." The people should be able to add, "And M. Pistache is a plucky

fellow, too, who fought Monsieur A. with foils and Monsieur B. with pistols, both about nothing, for he is a terrible character when the mustard mounts to his nose."

This sort of certificate raises a man in the world's esteem ; and, failing it, M. Pistache might risk being called "*ce bon Pistache*," which would be intolerable. For "*le bon Pistache*" would mean the Pistache of an obliging turn, like the dog who let his tail be trodden on : "You may slap him on the back, send him to Rome with a telegram on All Fools' day, and joke with him about his grandmother"—*facetiæ* not to be endured a moment by any Frenchman careful as to appearances. Besides, duelling has this advantage, that until you have pinked a few contemporaries it is not decent to proclaim your opinion that duelling is a foolish custom, weak and absurd.

Now, M. Pistache when he arrived in Paris for the winter season had not yet made his proofs, and was inwardly humiliated at it. Was it that his sweetness of disposition had prevented him from quarrelling without a reason, or that he lacked that eminently social art of detecting offences where none are meant ? Anyhow, he had kept at peace with the world, and, as a result, saw that repugnant adjective of *bon* looming upon him with perceptible speed. Yet he could not call a man out for slapping him on the back, nor force people to say disagreeable things which must be washed out in blood. His mood was to be smileful, and mankind paid back his smiles so cheerfully in the same coin that, short of going into his club, catching up the hat of some testy member and putting it politely but firmly into the fireplace, he saw no method whatever of getting up an affair of honour.

However, when a man knows that he must pay a subscription at some time, he naturally makes his arrangements for paying conveniently ; and M. Pistache, who knew that his tribute of blood could not be staved off eternally, had actually been taking a series of ferocious fencing lessons with a view to meeting his call with intrepidity so soon as it should arise, when he happened

to read of an "affair of honour" which had just terminated most unpleasantly. Not only had one of the combatants been killed outright, but the survivor, duly secured by the gendarmes, had been tried and sentenced to many years' detention with hard labour. A prolonged term of solitary confinement in prison, with cocoa-nut mat-making for his daily occupation, was not the kind of fruit which M. Pistache wished his duel to yield, so that on the whole this sad affair wreathed his brow in melancholy. Note that if M. Pistache had been truly bent on drawing the sword, the fear of penalties need not have deterred him an hour. Nothing is easier than for principals and seconds to pledge their words to secrecy, and under such conditions a murderous combat can be fought out pleasantly in a sequestered spot beyond eye and ear-shot of justice—indeed, such duels are fought every week in France by men who mean business.

But then M. Pistache did not mean business in the tragical sense of that term. What he wanted was a gallant, undeadly duel of the traditional sort, with plenty of newspaper puffing, mutual compliments, reconciliatory breakfast, and perhaps a hundred franc fine to wind up with. Thus he would have exchanged bitter but witty words with his antagonist in a public place—say the slips of a play-house—and a cartel would have been hurled *à la Régence*, amidst a bevy of actresses paling with emotion and interposing their tears and white arms to stay the martial ardour of the disputants. Then, when the duel had triumphantly ended in two scratches and champagne for seven, including the surgeon, the press would have published minute and excited *procès verbaux* of the whole affair, stating how chivalrously the parties had conducted themselves; and both the public prosecutor and the judge would have borne their own homage to the general bravery of the proceedings.

This is how a proper duel between Frenchmen should be carried through, as every living duellist of note, from M. Henri de Pène to M. Paul de Cassagnac, can testify; but your gashing hole-and-corner duels, with no paragraphs in the papers, no champagne,

but policemen and imprisonment as a climax, are revolting things—only fit for Germans or savages.

All this clearly laid down, let it be imagined what were the feelings of M. Pistache when, just as he had begun to tell himself that he must be prudent for a while, a duel fell upon him all of a sudden, and a most ugly-looking duel too, with an American, one Mr. Democritus O. Tuff, of Petroleumville, U.S. Mr. Tuff had come to Paris to amuse himself; he met M. Pistache at the club to which they both belonged, and forthwith proceeded to poke fun at him. There were some who said that poking fun was a second nature with Mr. Tuff, and that his choosing M. Pistache for the butt of his pleasantries was an accidental circumstance; but then the knowledge that he must be cautious for fear of imprisonment had perhaps developed an extra-sensitiveness in M. Pistache, so that he took it very badly when, on arriving at midnight on Shrove Tuesday at the Tobagian Embassy disguised as a Cochin-China fowl, he learned that the invitation which he held in his talons must be a hoax, for his Excellency, General Escadrilla, was giving no ball that night.

Yet the invitation had been signed in the name of the Ambassador's first secretary, and had conveyed in express terms that no guests would be admitted without fancy costume; moreover, Mr. Tuff and his friends Prince Casino and the Marquis de Rigodon had both pretended to have similar invitations, and it was at Mr. Tuff's suggestion that M. Pistache had arrayed himself like a Cochin-China fowl, "for," said the American, "we had better all four go as poultry, and make a quadrille of it." It is true that farces are permissible in carnival time, and, as it happened to be that festive season of the year, M. Pistache should have been on his guard; but there are farces which exceed all limits. He raved as he rolled away from the embassy in his ruffled plumes; and such was his wrath that he screamed to the coachman to drive straight to the club instead of first going home to change his things.

The truth is that the thirst for vengeance made him forgetful,

but perhaps the yellow feathers that coated his legs and body, and the cock's head which he carried under his arm as a Prussian officer does his helmet, somewhat detracted from the outraged dignity of his countenance as he bounded up the club staircase and plunged towards the card-room. All M. Pistache's tormentors are present—Prince Casino, who stops half way in his deal to roar ; young Rigodon, who sinks on to a sofa in spasms ; and that diabolical American, who buries his sallow face in his handkerchief and screams like a hyæna.

"Ah, you laugh !" howls M. Pistache, whose plumage seems to bristle upon end with fury, and, making a dart towards Mr. Tuff's glass of mint-julep, he dashes that beverage with a rageful hand over the American's elaborate waistcoat.

There is no retracting now, the deed is done. M. Pistache is hurried downstairs into his brougham by the astounded bystanders, and he is vaguely conscious as he speeds homewards that he has mentioned two hussar officers—the Marquis de Muguet and Comte Mirliflor, both spectators of the scene—to act as his friends. Then an hour passes, and after that another hour, and M. Pistache, divested of his fancy costume, robed in a dressing-gown and feverishly smoking a cigar, sits by his fireside as the two hussars enter to give him an account of their mission. If M. Pistache had caught them outside the door, he might possibly have observed that they were tittering and had a humorous twinkle in their eyes ; but as it is he notes only an aspect of the utmost seriousness on their features.

"It is a gloomy business, my poor Pistache," begins M. de Muguet, and he unfolds how that American, being a sanguinary character, and having, as the insulted party, the choice of weapons, had stipulated for nothing less than that the two principals should be let loose in the Bois de Vincennes, each with a rifle and fifty cartridges, and do their best at each other from behind the trees.

"But we explained that this was impossible because the shooting season is over, and the forest rangers might wonder," adds the

Marquis feelingly; "and then he was for a Corsican duel—foot to foot, with two daggers apiece."

"Good God! but the man is a brute," falters M. Pistache, experiencing something like lumps of ice running down his spine.

"Yes, he's a downright brute," answers the Marquis, "but we have obtained reasonable terms at last: you are each to have a pair of double-barrelled pistols, to stand at ten paces apart, and to fire at will walking towards each other."

"Ten paces—four bullets," answers M. Pistache, with eyes starting, and a huge lump rising to his throat; but he can add no more, for this is mere murder—one of those unnatural, barbarous combats which, as above said, are unworthy of a Frenchman, and M. Pistache sees that his doom is sealed. "Thank you, my friends," he says, recovering a deadly calm after the first moment's emotion. "Thanks. I shall be ready;" and the pair of hussars, wringing his hands in silence, promise to be with him at seven, and withdraw.

It is then five o'clock, and when the friends reappear at seven, having a box of pistols in their brougham below, a heap of sealed envelopes is lying on M. Pistache's table. M. Pistache has made his will and bidden a pathetic but untrembling good-bye to all his kinsfolk and acquaintances.

A golden sun, a blue sky, an open expanse of turf for a clear mile to north and south, and the grand stand of the Vincennes racecourse acting as a shelter to the east—such is the smooth glad spot where M. Pistache and Mr. Tuff are going to exterminate one another. There is no waste of time in formalities, for that glass of mint-julep must be obliterated in gore without delay; so the principals and seconds coldly bow, the ground is measured, the pistols are loaded, and then M. Pistache suddenly finds himself with a deadly weapon in each hand, waiting for the fall of Prince Casino's handkerchief.

He feels no rancour, only heroic resignation; but he glances at the Prince, and as the handkerchief flutters to the earth, two rapid bangs are heard, and then a ghastly spectacle appears, for

the American, uttering a fearful wail, tosses his arms aloft, and bites the grass.

"You've killed him !" exclaims Prince Casino, coldly.

"Yes, and it was well shot," adds M. de Rigodon ; "but you must fly the country, and so must we, for there's prison and perhaps hulks in this deed."

The heartlessness of these men astounds M. Pistache, who stands dumb and horror-stricken. He has killed a fellow-creature ; he has shot the life out of a man at whom he had first thrown mint-julep, which was surely insult and injury enough in all conscience. But let us draw a curtain over these hideous feelings of remorse. M. Pistache is pushed by the shoulders ; he finds himself running over turf, panting through a strip of wood, stumbling down a road, and his four callous friends, who have left the body behind them, are scurrying along with him affrighted and breathless, seeing pursuing gendarmes in every twig which the wind blows after them. How much of this stampeding was done by M. Pistache he has never since been able to tell, but it is full noon before he scrambles, muddy and pallid, into his lodgings, intending to pack up and begone far away from the haunts of Frenchmen. It is noon as he bolts headlong into his room, and there—sees—Mr. Tuff, quietly smoking one of his cigars, and laughing !

We will not venture to analyse M. Pistache's precise sensations when he learned that he had fired at his enemy and had been fired at himself with cork bullets ; but let us trust that relief at not having taken the life of a fellow mortal predominated over the stings of wounded vanity. It is certain that he melted into tears and suffered himself unresistingly to be led to a breakfast at the Café Anglais, where honourable promises were made him over a salad bowl of mayonnaise that the joke should not creep into the newspapers.

But from this time forth, whether he like it or not, M. Pistache must put up with the appellation of "ce bon Pistache."

CHAPTER XII.

FROM CONVENT TO ALTAR.

A BUILDING of grey stone, suburban and secluded ; bars of iron before the windows, broken glass on the walls running away to either side of the main block and forming a loop of garden land behind it ; spikes over the front carriage door ; a grated trap-door in the postern of the small lodge beside ; in fact, a look of peace, blessedness, and hospitality about the whole place—such is the Convent of Notre Dame des Colombes.

Suppose it to be midday. A carriage which has stirred the echoes of the silent street with its clashing steppers pulls up at the door ; a coiffed face peers cautiously through the trap, and listens to a footman with a fur cape, who thrusts a card through the grating. Then a pause. Bolts are heard to creak and keys to jingle ; the big doors swerve back on their hinges, and the carriage passes into a yard, where a sleepy cat and a few sparrows are having it all to themselves on a grass-plot. It is Sister Prudence, the Sœur Tourière, who has opened the door, and it is the same prudent sister who now pulls a bell-chain and sounds three clanging peals, which bring out another sister from the door of a glum building at the far end of the yard.

This second nun, in her black serge gown, brass crucifix, brown chaplet, and speckless beguin, concealing every trace of hair and throat—as if hair and throat were things to pray against and be sorry for—is Sister Opportune, the Sœur Hospitalière, whose functions do not consist, as her title might lead one to infer, in doing the honours of the larder to any beggars who may call, but simply in receiving visitors, and conducting them to the Mother

Superior. • She stands with her hands in her wide sleeves and a respectful smile on her lips, while the caped footman opens the carriage door and releases Madame de Réséda, the venerable Comtesse d'Intriguières, Madame de Réséda's mother, and the Duc de Sangblen, who is a trifle over-dressed, and wears an earnest look, as if something requiring nerve were going to happen. Sister Opportune, without appearing to do so, has naturally sped a smooth glance towards this member of the intrusive sex, and taken his moral measurement in an instant, but she seems quite unconscious of him as she piously addresses the ladies, and says, "The Mother Superior is disengaged, mesdames."

It is the Mother Superior's duty to be disengaged on occasions like the present ; but leaving her to welcome her visitors in her sanctum, shift we the scene a moment to a parlour dedicated to St. Cecilia, where a young lady in blue merino is practising at the piano under the eye of a bald music-master and of Sister Vigilante, one of the Sœurs Institutrices. She is singing the romance of *Le Roi de Thule* :—

" Il é-était un roi-oi de Thu-u-ule
 A qui son é-é-pon-ouse fidè-e-le
 Lé-é-gua en son-ou-ouvenir d'elle,
 U-u-ye cou-oupe d'er ci-i-iselée."

Thus warbles this proper young person from a carefully expunged version, for Gérard de Nerval's popular romance does not, one is sorry to say, attribute the gift of the gold cup to his Majesty's faithful wife. The bald music-master beats time with wrinkled forefinger. Sister Vigilante nods her head as if she were asleep, though she is wide awake, depend upon it ; and the young lady's notes rise from octave to octave into a final bravura and staccato shriek of the most artistic sort imaginable. She is a most promising young pupil, aged eighteen or so, with a cherry bow on her blue merino to denote that she has reached the highest form in the convent school, and a few modest trinkets, which further indicate her position, and suggest that her school days may soon

be over. The music-master compliments her on her progress, Sister Vigilante adds her own tribute to the enjoyment she has derived, and while these pleasant things are in process of exchange a new sister appears, announcing demurely that Mademoiselle Berthe de Réséda is wanted in the parlour.

Hereon Mademoiselle Berthe blushes. If there were a looking-glass in St. Cecilia's room, she would glance towards it, and she actually does dart around her one of those mechanical looks peculiar to young ladies who are wanted. But mirrors are scarce in the convent, so Mademoiselle Berthe follows the sister in silence, and tries to seem as unsuspecting as Sister Opportune did in the yard—as unsuspecting as if she had not been warned of this visit days beforehand, and as if her chestnut hair, her new cherry bow, her little trinkets, &c., had not all been arranged to shine at their best with a special view to it.

This, indeed, is to be a rather important visit, and it may be as well to state at once that M. de Sangbleu has simply come to see his future wife, and that Mademoiselle Berthe is going into the parlour to be introduced for the first time to her future husband. It has all been settled in advance. Madame de Réséda, being the cousin of a marriageable orphan girl, had, of course with the assistance of her experienced mother, Madame d'Intriguères, cast about for a suitable husband, and had set eyes on M. de Sangbleu. There were two hundred thousand francs a year on one side, a dowry of a million francs down on the other; and the blue blood and Catholic principles of the two young people combined with the foregoing conditions to make a suitable match in every way.

This had been admitted by M. de Sangbleu when the subject was first broached to him diplomatically over a teacup, and he lent a willing ear to the proposal; but as marriage is a business matter with those who take a well-bred view of life, he naturally abstained from committing himself until he had spoken to his lawyer. On his side, the lawyer would offer no opinion until he had seen the lawyer of the other family; and these two guileless

hearts went over each other's title-deeds, stocks, shares, and leases, like men who profoundly mistrust one another, and are persuaded there must be some piece of chicanery at work under all this. But there was no chicanery. The title-deeds proved genuine and the shares good, so that M. de Sangbleu's lawyer—though convinced that his client could pick up something better by waiting—at last gave his consent to the alliance.

Romantic preliminaries being thus concluded, nothing remained but to make the young contracting parties known to each other, and hence this visit to the convent. But it need scarcely be said that the visit is only a form of consecration to what has been honourably decided on; and that if M. de Sangbleu, after being presented to Mademoiselle Berthe, were to sing out, like the actor in the play: "*Je n'en veux pas; tout est rompu!*" he would expose himself to the odium of all right-thinking minds.

It must be remembered that we are treating here of people who cultivate all the graces of life, and make up for the occasional suspiciousness of their respective lawyers by delicacy the most chivalrous where they themselves are concerned. In a country less observant of such delicacies than France, it might be a trying moment to a man waiting in a convent parlour to see a young person whom he will be bound to worship and cherish to the end of his or her days; but M. de Sangbleu does not appear to find it trying. He knows that Mademoiselle Berthe has been religiously trained; she has been described to him as amiable and accomplished—a most eligible Duchess in short; and if he stipulated for more than this, he would be exceeding that discretion which it is most necessary to observe when dealing with grave affairs.

• •

But it is gratifying to state that his discretion is rewarded, for when Mademoiselle Berthe comes into the room he finds her, if not pretty, at least nice-looking and graceful—just the young lady to improve vastly under Mr. Girth the milliner's skilful hands, and to blaze with a charming lustre in the Sangbleu family jewels. So it is a pretty sight enough to see the young Duke and

Mademoiselle Berthe salute each other decorously under the eyes of the excellent Mother Superior of the Colombes.

These marriages, contracted as it were within convent walls, under the maternal wing of the Church, and in all the innocency of love at first sight—for of the transactions between the lawyers the Church takes no account—are just the marriages which the good mother likes to smile on. They are fashionable, fitting marriages, too, such as were usual in past centuries ; and, though it cannot be contended that Frenchmen of past centuries had much reason to congratulate themselves on marrying young ladies who were always new to the world, and pined to navigate among its reefs and eddies immediately the honeymoon was over, yet the contrary rule would necessarily hold good in the present age, for our morals have greatly improved, as everybody is aware.

“I cannot express to you, Madame, what a comfort your sweet niece has been to us all,” says the good mother, addressing the venerable Madame d’Intriguères, and speaking as if M. de Sangbleu were miles away, and not intended to hear anything of this mystery ; “nothing can be more edifying than her docility of temper and her devotion to her studies. You were taking your drawing lesson, were you not, my child ?”

“Music, *ma mère*,” replies truthful Mademoiselle Berthe.

“Ah, yes, music. Yet her proficiency with her pencil and needle is equally remarkable. Have you not some of your work and drawings here to show your aunt, my child ?”

And it turns out by the merest hazard that there is a basketful of Mademoiselle Berthe’s embroidery in a corner of the Mother Superior’s room ; also an album of her sketches filled with cows, which are handed round and admired with emotion. One of these days it may become the usage for persons desirous of showing off the attainments of a maiden to beg her sit down and add up a washing bill, sew on a shirt button, and carve a fowl without splashing any gravy out of the dish ; but we have not come to that yet, and it is something for the present to get a set of animals that do look nearly like cows, and a few collarettes

almost as good as those that can be had in a shop for twenty sous.

M. de Sangbleu, indeed, would be content with less than that, for he will never require his wife to draw him a cow; and so, by way of getting an insight into her actual tastes, he asks her if she likes the country.

"I adore it, Monsieur le Duc," is her cheerful answer.

"And Paris is a nice place, too," continues the Duke, thoughtfully.

"Yes, I think it the most lovable of towns," replies the young lady; and surely all the elements of connubial bliss are summed up in these two answers, which prove an accommodating and thankful spirit. At all events M. de Sangbleu is satisfied, and his parting words at the end of the hour's visit are as good as an acceptance and an offer.

He bows and says: "I hope I shall have the pleasure to see you again, mademoiselle." After this M. de Sangbleu's line of conduct is dictated to him by established precedents. He will call ceremoniously on that tranquil nobleman, the Comte de Réséda, and crave permission to pay his addresses to Mademoiselle Berthe, and the Count, obeying his wife's instructions, will declare himself honoured. The next step will be to remove Mademoiselle Berthe from the convent, and bring her to her cousin's house, where M. de Sangbleu will be admitted to the privilege of sending her a bouquet every morning, and of paying her a visit every afternoon.

This is courting "*selon les règles*;" and the period of it should be about a month, at the end of which time the Duke would formally propose to Mademoiselle Berthe herself, be accepted, let us trust, and have the banns put up at the mairie (there are no special licenses in France), so that, providing M. Girth has got the *trousseau* ready, the contract might be signed in pomp, and the marriage be solemnized about a month after Easter. There can be no essential departure from this programme if everything is to be done conformably to the best traditions.

But now that we have made so sure of Mademoiselle Berthe's submissiveness to her aunt's and cousin's projects, it may be as well to inquire, if only for gallantry's sake, what she, in her heart, thinks of the whole proceeding. However, it would be of little use undergoing a ten years' education in such a moral convent as that of the Colombes, if one came out therefrom with wild notions about free selections in matrimony. And the truth is, Mademoiselle Berthe has seen so many of her schoolfellows go forth without regret—nay, with rejoicing—to many elderly gentlemen, and vow to love them, that a suitor, who is at once rich, ducal, young, and pleasing, comes upon her with the freshness of something almost too novel and too good to be true.

If she harboured any doubts as to her being a lucky girl, the rather acidulated compliments of her most affectionate friends in the cherry bows and merino dresses ought to enlighten her. But she has no doubts and requires no enlightening.

She feels inwardly very proud of her "pretender," for such is the name which the French give to gentlemen in M. de Sangbleu's interesting predicament. She is grateful to him, too, for his preference ; and the bridge is so short from pride and gratitude to love that Mademoiselle Berthe may safely be trusted to trip over it, if her bridegroom will only beckon to her smilingly and stretch her a helping hand. That he will do this we may be certain, and therefore, since he has been taught to look upon marriage as a business matter, he will be like a man who succeeds in business. But it seems there are some who fail. "

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BUSINESS OF MARRIAGE.

MONSIEUR LE DUC DAGOBERT DE SANGBLEU is not the only nobleman belonging to the *grand monde* who looks upon matrimony as a business transaction, nor is that becoming practice confined to the exalted sphere he moves in. Although we are treating here of what French journalists, with simplified orthography, usually style "*le Hig* Lif*"—so that lower rungs of the social ladder are beneath our view—it is only right we should mention that genuine High Life has its counterpart in spurious High Life ; and it is to be feared that the latter claims the acquaintance of poor Prince X. Y. Z., "allied to the first families of Europe," who so often advertises in the *Gazette des Boulevards* for a wife "with a dower of a million francs in ready cash."

The Prince does not tell us what sum he would bring on his own side, but he feelingly observes that he has preserved "all his teeth ;" and it is surprising that this touching announcement should have been so often and apparently so fruitlessly repeated, for Princes, albeit numerous, are by no means as plentiful as mushrooms, and relationship to the first families of Europe ought assuredly to have enabled him to find a spouse ere now.

He might, perhaps, have had some difficulty in finding a youthful heiress like Mademoiselle Berthe de Réséda, preserved by narrowing nunnery walls from the contamination of the outside world ; and no doubt the parents of marriageable young ladies, with dowers of a million francs are at times apt to be somewhat exacting. But if the Prince has his parchments in order, instead of advertising, he would have done better to apply to that re-

nowned negotiator, the illustrious Monsieur de St. Roch, whom M. Emile Gaboriau, the novelist, has so obligingly introduced to the uninitiated,* and who really exists in flesh and blood.

Boulevardian Paris has long been acquainted with the celebrated Matrimonial Ambassador, with his courtly and affable manners, his poetical flaxen wig, his swallow-tailed bluebell coat and gold buttons, his admirable shirt frills and ruffles of Malines lace, his diamond rings and studs, and his numerous watchchains which hang around his neck, dangle over his low waistcoat, and jingle merrily at every step he takes.

M. de St. Roch, whose motto is "Celerity, Discretion, and Disinterestedness," and whose advertisements, printed in huge type, do not form the least important item in the annual profits of M. Blagueferme's journal, the *Oriplamme* (which M. de Postiche edits so ably) proclaims himself to be the founder of the "Matrimonial Profession." His registers, he tells us, are indited in cypher, of which he alone possesses the key, and on his death everything that might furnish a clue to his transactions will be destroyed.

Bachelors and spinsters, widows and widowers are thus assured of perfect secrecy. The house, which M. de St. Roch inhabits in the fashionable quarter of the Chaussée d'Antin, has, moreover, numerous separate entrances; there are several waiting saloons, distinguished by blue, mauve, pink, amber, olive, and crimson hangings, and a secret passage furnishes a convenient mode of egress into a side street, so that no two clients ever encounter each other.

St. Roch would certainly be the very man to find a suitable wife for poor Prince X. Y. Z. (who has preserved his thirty-two teeth), for he counts—at least he says so—a number of reigning houses, duly mentioned in the *Almanach de Gotha*, among his clients. Moreover, to quote the words of his advertisement, "he is strictly to be depended on." Now this last point is important,

* See Gaboriau's Sensational Novels—"The Little Old Man of Batignolles," &c.

for alas ! as St. Roch himself will tell you, tearing with rage at his poetical flaxen wig, he has imitators and competitors—worthless charlatans who seem bent upon ruining the matrimonial profession, who constantly come into contact with the law, and whose legal misadventures cast discredit even upon Hymen's Pontiff himself.

Take the case of Madame de St. Just for instance. Here was a woman who dared to assume an aristocratic name which recalled only too forcibly M. de St. Roch's genuine patronymic. She imitated even the style of his advertisements, and catered for clients in High Life circles just as he does himself. Fortunately Justice was on the watch. The strong arm of the law intervened, and one fine day Madame de St. Just found herself in the dock of the Court of Correctional Police, charged with having obtained money under false pretences from a middle-aged swain who had applied to her to find him a wife.

Originally her name was Honorine Roux, and she was the child of industrious parents who kept a grocery shop at Dôle, once the capital of Burgundy. At nineteen she came to Paris, and was no more heard of until she returned to Dôle as Madame Jobert, wife to a gentleman whose whereabouts was unknown. Perhaps it was the cloud of mystery which enshrouded M. Jobert—perhaps simply the fact of Madame Jobert's poverty. Anyhow, Madame Jobert's reception in the family circle was not what it might have been, and she was well-nigh reduced to the humiliating expedient of earning her bread as a charwoman. Providentially, the war which had broken out was quickly followed by the Commune ; so Madame Jobert came back to Paris, and at once took a place among that attractive sisterhood who set themselves to regenerating the women of France, while M. Felix Pyat and General Cluseret did their best for the men.

She lectured on women's rights in churches and music-halls ; she headed deputations who carried petitions to the Hôtel de Ville in favour of secular education for girls ; she lent her valuable assistance in opening schools where this secular educa-

tion was inaugurated ; and she figured with a plate in her hand at the patriotic concerts held in the Tuilleries. It was not quite safe declining to put anything into the plates brought round to you by lady regenerators at these patriotic concerts, and so Madame Jobert's plates were always full ; and indeed the cause of charity and regeneration profited so far that Madame Jobert was enabled when the Commune had collapsed to establish herself as a fortune-teller under the more prepossessing name of Madame Hermosa.

A Parisian fortune-teller must not be compared with a London member of the same profession. She does not prowl round kitchen-maids with a view to spoons ; she advertises "herself" bravely in the broad light of day, buys a toad, a skull, a stuffed lizard, and a black cat ; calls her science chiromancy or cartomancy ; and charges her customers from five to a hundred francs, according as she gives them the *petit jeu*, *jeu moyen*, or *grand jeu*. There are now-a-days, reckoning by Bottin's Directory, sixty-five sibyls practising in Paris, and the only wonder is, that there should be no more, for the trade pays singularly well. French men and women, who affect to believe in nothing, will slink off to the fortune-teller's at critical junctures in their lives, and watch the evolutions of the toad, the stuffed lizard, and the black cat, with eyes full of awe and wistfulness. Scepticism is only skin deep in this amusing country, and below it lies a stratum of credulity which any charlatan so minded may dig and delve in to his heart's content ; and the police, who know the national foible for soothsaying, have never meddled with fortune-tellers. Why, indeed, should they ? for these women are often valuable to them in times of public trouble.

Madame Hermosa, then, quickly amassed sufficient to embark on wider enterprises ; she assumed, in imitation of M. de St. Roch, the aristocratic cognomen of Madame de St. Just, and opened in a fashionable quarter of the town the "Matrimonial Institute of France." It may be noted that persons of Madame de St. Just's age and social status have several very lucrative trades

open to them in Paris, provided they can only collect a little capital to start with. They may become *marchandés à la toilette*, keepers of genteel boarding-houses; or, in connivance with the police, set up a clandestine gambling saloon, which will be used by the Rue de Jerusalem as a trap for catching native sharpers, young spendthrifts, and needy foreigners. But the marriage agency business has the most prestige of all, and, as exercised by Madame de St. Just (after St. Roch's fashion), is a very imposing profession indeed.

This lady commenced operations with a finely furnished suite of rooms, and an extremely beautiful prospectus, in which, after prefacing with the promise of dowers "from a hundred thousand francs up to several millions," she went on to state that the matrimonial profession had been hitherto misunderstood, but that she would now place herself at the head of it, and, being a former pupil of the Convent of the Sacred Heart, act under the patronage of the clergy. The nobility and the bourgeoisie were tending more to unite their ancient names and laboriously earned wealth, and she hoped that, by encouraging this propensity, a hardy race might grow up under her auspices, endowed both with domestic and chivalrous virtues, and aid in the regeneration of society. "My object is a holy and a great one," she concluded. "May honest hearts perceive it, and march with me, taking for their motto—France, Religion, Family."

Such a stirring appeal could not fail to entice, nor did it. The "Institute" began its work of regeneration, and in the course of five months, as proved by the ledgers, which were kept with great regularity, and read at her trial, Madame de St. Just found one hundred and ninety-two customers, and pocketed 29,871 francs (£1,195 2s. 6d.). Her fee was a hundred francs down and five per cent. on the dower, to be paid within three months of marriage. Her customers were of all ranks, and the public prosecutor was obliged to own that many of them were persons of "the highest respectability," and that the business was carried on with "every semblance of honour." Nevertheless

he moved that Madame de St. Just might be punished for having accepted one hundred francs from the plaintiff and not having found him a wife in return.

Whenever M. de St. Roch refers to this case, as he often does in feeling terms, while establishing the great difference between himself and his imitators, he insists on the arrant stupidity of this woman in keeping her ledgers in ordinary figures.

"Why did she not use cypher?" he will ask. "How could the police have investigated her doings then? But no, she was a woman of low birth, a woman of no intellect, a disgrace to our noble profession!"

"And she could not find the plaintiff a wife," he will resume. "Plainly she had no connections. But I—I have always been able to suit the most difficult tastes, and I have never made an unhappy match. My saloons are full of votive offerings presented to me by grateful wives and husbands; and over and over again am I requested to become god-father to the children of the happy pairs I have united."

M. de St. Roch is undoubtedly worthy of all credit, but then it should be remembered that he only labours for the happiness of the higher classes who unite reason with gratitude, whereas Madame de St. Just, despite her aristocratic pseudonym and her glowing prospectus, had often to deal with the lower strata of society. For instance, after the middle-aged swain, who subsequently prosecuted her, had paid his fee, she sent him to look at a young lady living in that lowest of low neighbourhoods—Belleville.

This young person, however, had just plighted her troth to another customer from the "Institute;" so the middle-aged swain returned, and was referred to "an individual in a café," which individual took him to a shop on one of the boulevards, and showed him through the window a maiden of eighteen selling tobacco by her mother's side. The plaintiff deemed her too young, whereat Madame de St. Just remarked angrily that he was difficult to please, but produced "a list of heiresses," and

deputed him to six of them one after the other. Three of them would have nothing to say to him, and he declined saying anything to the other three. There was no suiting such a man, and Madame de St. Just sent him about his business, adding that he had given her more trouble than all her previous customers put together, and that his claim to have his hundred francs restored him was the most preposterous thing she had ever heard.

The judges of the Correctional Court inclined to this opinion too. After listening to the public prosecutor, who laid principal stress on Madame de St. Just's Communist antecedents, they dismissed the charge with costs—an unlucky thing for the plaintiff, who confessed that he was on the look-out for a wife simply because he was penniless ; but they took a stern view of the defendant's having sported a name and particle which were not her own ; and, on this count, sentenced her to pay a fine of five hundred francs.

“Not half enough!” exclaimed M. de St. Roch, when he heard of the decision : but then it should be remembered he was prejudiced.

CHAPTER XIV.

A PRIVATE INQUIRY.

THE trade of hiring out police spies at so much a day is a thriving one in France, and, indeed, as Frenchmen have so often been trapped by spurious show and glitter, it is only natural they should want to know more about their acquaintances than shines on the surface. The speculator has every interest to ascertain whether the partner who has answered his advertisement in the *Petites Affiches* is what he represents himself to be ; the householder is anxious to ascertain whether the imposing gentleman who has taken the whole of his first-floor suite on a three years' lease is as much of a Duke as appears on his visiting cards ; and tradesmen feel a pardonable curiosity about the Roumanian Princesses and United States Generals who muster so thickly in the Avenue des Champs Elysées, and are better known to frequenters of festive resorts than to the ambassadors of their respective countries.

One is concerned to add that husbands and wives have always found Inquiry Offices useful for keeping a tender watch on each other's doings, but to no classes have these offices rendered such services as to parents with marriageable daughters, and to suitors who desired to learn the full truth about these marriageable daughters' dowers. French marriages, like others, are made in heaven, but they are sometimes "arranged" by M. de St. Roch or Madame de St. Just, and they are often brought about by notaries or by good-natured lady friends of middle age and middling income, who receive commissions on their efforts ; and it becomes therefore very essential that the contracting parties should be

able to scrutinize one another's antecedents with a searching eye. Considered from their utility in promoting this end, let us see how French Inquiry Offices work ; for they work in hundreds of directions all over France, and most efficaciously, as we shall presently admit.

M. Rondeau, a plain spoken man, who has retired from keeping a café not unprofitably, is climbing the staircase of an Inquiry Office, the address of which he found in his newspaper. He has a pleasant villa at Passy, and, in ascending, he glances slyly over the balusters to see whether any of his Passy neighbours may have followed him, for he knows them to be a prying set and murderously jealous of him at this juncture by reason of the daily visits paid to the Villa Rondeau by the young Vicomte Anténor de Bombonnelle.

It is precisely about this young Viscount that M. Rondeau wants to institute inquiries. He knows little of him except that M. Anténor is evidently bent on proposing to his only daughter Virginie, and that he is a silvery-tongued youth who wears capital hats and talks of having twelve thousand francs a year and expectations of soon being appointed to a sub-prefectship. But M. Rondeau is too old in the world's ways to take any man's statements for granted. Titles are easy to assume in France, in despite of all the fuss made in registering births and marriages, and aiming penal clauses at pretenders. Then there is no Doctors' Commons where wills can be examined, so that a man who claims to have twelve thousand francs a year may not possess as many pence ; and, finally, what guarantee is there that the expected sub-prefectship will ever be bestowed ?

M. Rondeau might have applied for information to the lady who introduced the Viscount to Mademoiselle Virginie, but she may have an interest in the marriage, and in any case would not disparage a *protégé* of her own ; as to M. Anténor's family notary, notaries never discredit their clients ; nor would M. Anténor's private friends discredit him ; or if perchance one of them revealed unpleasant things, how could one be sure that this

abusive friend was not actuated by some unworthy grudge against the Bombonnelle household? You see how prudent a French father can be when he tries, and M. Rondeau is convinced that the only true way of probing a young man's respectability is to interrogate his tradesmen to learn whether he is indebted; also to find out from his concierge or servant whether he have any *liaison* incompatible with morality, and if so, to interview that *liaison* and discover whether it be very serious.

So M. Rondeau, having been admitted into the presence of the office manager, broaches these views to him and is careful to add that his reason for being so inquisitive is, that Mademoiselle Virginie will have a dower of 300,000 francs, which he, Rondeau, would not like to deliver into spendthrift hands. The manager appreciates this sentiment, and charges the retired café keeper five hundred francs on account, explaining that investigations of this sort are always delicate and even perilous; but that M. Rondeau may be of good cheer, for that the office to which he has applied acts from philanthropic motives and not from any thirst after profits—all which M. Rondeau drinks in full of faith and somewhat touched. A few hours after he has departed the manager summons one of his men, and tells him carelessly to go and find out all he can about the Vicomte Anténor de Bombonnelle, in the Rue d'Ash, and he arms him with a twenty-franc piece for the expedition.

The twenty-franc man is well used to his work, and walks straightway to the fountain-head of all information in such cases—Vicomte Anténor's concierge. Who better than the door-keeper, who receives one's letters, sweep's one's staircase, peeps conscientiously through one's key-hole, and browbeats one's visitors, is in a position to speak with entire authority concerning us? Vicomte Anténor's concierge, on being offered a five-franc piece, is disposed to answer questions; but he, too, knows his work, and it takes a second five-franc piece before he can remember the entire list of his lodger's tradesmen, and a third before he lets out the name of Mademoiselle Toupinette, of the

Folies Parisiennes, with whom Vicomte Anténor, adds the concierge, “is *au mieux*.”

Hereon the agent, rather regretting that he has not been able to screw out his news for ten francs instead of fifteen, steps off to see Vicomte Anténor’s tailor, and it is pleasant to add that he finds him in a mood highly confidential. But see how the world wags ! It happens that Vicomte Anténor is embedded up to the neck in his tailor’s books ; but a few days before, discussing rather gloomily with this parvenu the prospects of a cash payment, Vicomte Anténor owned that he saw no way of discharging his debts save by a wealthy marriage, “and I have such a one in view,” added he. Now the tailor who wants his bill paid is not so simple as to hinder his debtor’s wedding ; and scenting in his visitor an applicant from the future father-in-law, he sketches of Vicomte Anténor a portrait in oil and rose colour most enchanting, and winds up by referring the agent to Vicomte Anténor’s bootmaker, hatter, and hosier to corroborate the truth of his picture.

The bootmaker, hatter, and hosier, who are in the same case as the tailor, do corroborate his picture with much gush ; so that the agent, who has not poked his nose into other people’s affairs so long for nothing, walks away smelling a “plant.” But he does not betake himself to Mademoiselle Toupinette’s residence, for he has a shrewd suspicion that this young lady might cuff his ears and have him turned out (such things have occurred to him before), so he simply returns to the Rue d’Ash, hangs about till dusk, and when he thinks it likely that the Viscount may have come home to dress, or fetch money for his evening’s amusement, enters the house, and slinks up to that young nobleman’s second-floor chambers.

He finds M. Anténor at home, and without more ado explains his business. “I have been ordered to make inquiries about you, Monsieur le Vicomte, and have received such an excellent account of you that I scarcely like to retail it—it sounds too good to be true.”

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"There you are wrong," laughs the Viscount, throwing the man a hundred-franc note. "If my future father-in-law were a nobleman, he would get suspicious if I were described to him as a saint; but M. Rondeau is a bourgeois, and you will please report to him that I attend mass every Sunday, and go to confession on the first Friday of each month."

"On the first Friday of each month," echoes the agent.

"Just so, and that I spend the ember days in going about on good works," proceeds M. Anténor, coolly; "and now may I inquire from what office you come?"

"Oh, that is a matter of no importance, Monsieur le Vicomte," protests the agent, obsequiously. "Only if I could be of any use to Monsieur le Vicomte, I should be delighted to act for him independently, as my profits are cruelly small."

"Yes, but if I employed you, you would betray me as you have M. Rondeau," is Vicomte Anténor's luminous observation.

"Oh, there is no fear of that, sir," responds the agent, with engaging candour; "we never like to bring young men into trouble, and we always serve them faithfully when they honour us with their confidence."

"Well, then, you will furnish me with a minute, graphic, and most veracious account of M. Rondeau," says M. Anténor, after a moment's hesitation, "and you will particularly assure yourself as to whether he has 300,000 francs to bestow on his daughter; but mind, I shall know whether you speak the truth, for I have already employed another agent, whose reports will be there to check yours."

"Ah! you understand the true principles of business, monsieur!" exclaims the agent, admiringly; "and now I will only ask you to furnish me with some details about your antecedents and family to pad my report with."

M. Anténor furnishes these details, nothing loth; and the next morning the agent returns to his master to narrate all he knows and to claim one hundred francs for the expenses to which he has been put in bribing most reticent informers. As these inquiry

offices are always conducted on terms of most guileless confidence between master and man, the manager hands his agent a couple of napoleons, with the affectionate intimation that he may go and fish for the other three in the Seine ; and after this ten days elapse, for an office would make itself too cheap if it forwarded information by return of post.

On the eleventh day, M. Rondeau receives a big envelope with the Vicomte Anténor de Bombonnelle's biography fairly written out over three pages of foolscap, and reading much like a passage out of the life of an early Christian martyr ; and with it is enclosed a note stating that as the office has been put to the great expense of sending two agents into the provinces and keeping three others trudging about Paris, the bill (deducting the first five hundred francs on account) amounts to one thousand nine hundred and ninety-eight francs, seventy-five centimes. Inquiry office bills are always paid without question, so M. Rondeau relieves himself of two thousand francs, thinking the cost cheap, since he has learned beyond doubt that his daughter's suitor is an authentic Viscount, in easy circumstances, of godly conversation, and an excellent young man into the bargain.

That M. Anténor de Bombonnelle is an excellent young man there can be no doubt ; unfortunately he is not a Viscount, nor has he twelve thousand francs a year, nor has he any prospects of obtaining a sub-prefecture unless he first marries, pays his debts, and has an assured income to show. He is the orphan son of a tradesman, and began life measuring calico ; but the war having caused his grandfather to die of panic, leaving him fifty thousand francs in cash, and the Commune having burned the civil registers whereon M. Anténor was entered as plain Anténor Bombonneau, this amiable young Frenchman was enabled to start in the world afresh, as many others did.

Escorted by a pair of witnesses—to wit, two publicans, paid twenty francs apiece for their complacency—he went to the Hôtel de Ville after the Commune, filed the statutory declaration that he was Bombonnelle, and a Viscount, and saw these things inscribed

for him on stamped paper because there were none present who cared to dispute their accuracy. Clothed in this new *état civil*, he next set up in smart lodgings—not as a calico measurer, however, but as a young nobleman of fortune; and he resolved to spend his fifty thousand francs in looking about for a good wife, well-dowered—of which there are many for those who search with diligence.

We have seen how he succeeded; but it would be unfair to argue from this that M. Anténor possessed the stock of vices which distinguish adventurers in some other countries. He had never done a shabby thing except take a name and title which were not his; but this he considers lawful—all Frenchmen being equal. He is not an adept at billiards, nor cards, nor thimble-rigging: he has upright sentiments, loves poetry, and would make Mademoiselle Virginie a most tender husband, and invest her three hundred thousand-francs with forethought and economy.

But here a painful disclosure has to be made. The agents sent a-field by M. Anténor have reported that the three hundred thousand francs are “all right,” and this is true; but M. Rondeau, seeing his future son-in-law so prosperous and full of expectations, has been pondering that he might give Mademoiselle Virginie one hundred thousand francs only, promising to pay the rest by-and-by, and then go off and invest the rest in an annuity, so as to make the autumn and winter of his own life pleasanter. He calculates that the secret need only be let out when he dies, by which time he will be tolerably indifferent to what his daughter’s husband may say or think; and, to make our story short, it is probable that M. Anténor will fall into this trap. When, however, he finds himself married, with but a hundred thousand francs in hand, and fifty thousand francs’ worth of debts to pay, the chances are that he will be obliged to wear less glossy hats than at present, and to work for his living.

And this eventually brings us to the refreshing moral that scheming young people often overleap their aims, and that it is better not to scheme, but to measure calico.

CHAPTER XV.

ADOPTION.

THOSE who are not born in High Life are often fain to belong to it, and *parvenus* make no small efforts to edge their way into the select society of the Faubourg St. Germain. But this is by no means easily accomplished. Wealth is scarcely of any use at all, and even a title is of no advantage unless it can be traced back in the most authentic manner to some date prior to the Revolution. An exception might perhaps be made in favour of some of the nobles created by Louis XVIII. or Charles X., but your other modern aristocrats are usually tabooed.

It is one thing to belong to the Faubourg St. Honoré, or the Quartier Malesherbes or the Chaussée d'Antin, and another to form part of the select inner circle of the Rue de Varennes. You may be quite certain that poor Prince X. Y. Z.—even if he be a Prince, which I am beginning to doubt—has never set foot in the drawing-rooms of Mesdames de Rosethé, de Réséda, and de Mignonnette; and as for the Vicomte Anténor de Bombonnelle, that young gentleman, so adroit in deceiving plain spoken M. Rondeau, would have been seen through at once, had he tried to obtain an introduction into the noble Faubourg.

Still in certain circles of so called aristocratic society, notably in those in which the cosmopolitan element mostly moves, parchments and letters patent are not so particularly inquired after. Moreover, for a great many people a title always has certain charms, no matter how it may have been come by. We are told that these are democratic times, and yet, every day or so, one or another of the newspapers publishes a couple, and often a string

of advertisements from people who offer a round sum for the honour of being adopted by a nobleman in distress.

Says the French Civil Code : "A man may adopt as his child and constitute as his heir—with reserve of one-third of his property to the heirs-at-law—any person who shall have saved his life." Moreover, adoption is allowed when a person removes a child from the Foundling and educates him satisfactorily until he is twenty-one, at which age, the foundling must give his consent to the adoption ; and, finally, the object of adoption is realised when a man is pleased to "recognise" a child,—that is, certify with the mother's assent that the child is his own. However, adoption would also seem to have some lucrative aspects, judging from the frequent advertisements, such as we have referred to, and which bear on their face the potentiality of so much hard swearing that it is a wonder the police do not look more closely into them.

Now, one day there appeared in the papers an advertisement offering ten thousand francs a year for adoption by an authentic Duke or Prince ; and this bait sent many funny-looking old gentlemen ringing at the door of a house near the Bois de Boulogne. It may be supposed that most of them failed to satisfy requirements, for they came out chapfallen ; but at last there arrived a weazel-headed, shrunken little body, crowned with a shockingly bad hat, and this one on furnishing his name was ushered, with marks of astonishment and respect, into the presence of the advertiser—a young man of about thirty, with intelligent features spoiled by a restless expression of the eyes.

This gentleman passed for an American, but he was in reality a Frenchman, and one of a class not uncommon in all countries where compulsory military service flourishes. He had never done anything criminal, but, objecting to waste the best years of his life in the army for one sou a day, he had, at the age of twenty, decamped to the United States, and in the course of ten years had been so lucky at Petroleumville that he had amassed a million dollars. Then he had been seized with that desire of home which

gnaws all Frenchmen in foreign climes. Englishmen and Germans find their country everywhere ; a Frenchman outside France always feels as though he were among barbarians ; and so Charles Gredon set sail again for France, secretly repenting of his flight, and knowing that his fortune would yield him no pleasure if he were obliged to spend it in exile.

However, it was not safe for him to use his real name, for a deserter can only plead limitation at the end of twenty years ; accordingly he dubbed himself Wiggins, and proceeded to search for some countryman who by adoption could enable him to slip back into the *état civil* by a side door. His ambition to secure a title was only a thing by the way, conforming to the maxim that when a bird borrows plumes he may as well take a peacock's as a goose's.

So Charles Gredon, alias Wiggins, eyed the little body in the bad hat as though to take stock of his anatomy and judge how long he was likely to last. "You are the Duc de Pontbrisé ?" he said, motioning him civilly to a chair.

"Yes ; and Marquis de Vieuxcrénœux : that would be the title of my eldest son if I had one ; but I haven't."

"I should like to see your parchments."

"I have them all in my pocket. Our family was ruined by the Revolution ; we picked up again under Charles X., but unhappy speculations under the reigns of Louis Philippe and the late usurper stripped me of all I had recovered and brought me to my present plight, which is wretched enough."

"And you would be ready to adopt me for ten thousand francs a year ?"

"Pardon me, I should like the capital of that income, two hundred thousand francs down. There are ten chances to one that I shall die before eight years have passed, for privations have undermined me ; and by living at the rate of twenty-five thousand francs a year, I should at least spend my declining years amid luxuries suited to my rank."

"Yes, and these luxuries would be giving you a taste for life ;

you would contrive to live beyond your eight years, and then come to me for another two hundred thousand francs," remarked Wiggins, who had not resided among the Yankees for nothing.

"If I live beyond eight years I will ask you for a room in your house, with good and dutiful attentions; nothing else," answered the Duke, with quiet dignity. "You may take it or leave it, Monsieur Wiggins. I am not over-anxious to sell my title; and before even entering upon negotiations I must request undoubted proofs of your honourable character."

The parleying, placed on such a respectable footing as this, proceeded with mutual esteem and gratification. Wiggins, in guarantee of his honour, produced his cheque-book; the Duc de Pontbrisé drew out a pound and a half of documents on sheep-skin and vellum—patents of nobility, deeds of sale and transfer, baptismal certificates, &c. Then references were exchanged, then the pair lunched, and finally was broached the delicate question as to how the adoption should be effected.

The Duke pronounced himself against "recognition." "We should have to find some woman," he said; "and, although there are plenty of the sex who for a trifle would swear you were their son, there is no relying on women's tongues. They are apt to blab to their cronies, or when dying to pour out their confessions into the bosom of the public prosecutor. Much better that you should save my life before witnesses."

"I think so too."

"And meanwhile you will please give me a thousand franc note to buy clothes befitting my station," added the Duke, "and before I risk my life you must give me your note-of-hand at thirty days for the two hundred thousand francs in question."

Mr. Wiggins could not help thinking that his prospective father laid down his conditions in rather a high-handed way, but he attributed this to the natural instincts of nobility, and inwardly rejoiced at it. He disbursed the thousand franc note, and then

reddening a little, "You will excuse my asking one question, Monsieur le Duc; you have never been in gaol?"

"Monsieur Wiggins!" exclaimed his grace, rising with a stern frown.

"I beg pardon," stammered the French Yankee, "it was only a formality."

Some three weeks after the above incidents a pleasant party of five took a boat at St. Cloud to go and fish for gudgeon in the Seine. There was the Duc de Pontbrisé, fresh shaved, and clad in a fine country suit of grey; our Wiggins, in a Panama; a brother American, enriched by oils; and a brace of genuinely ennobled Frenchmen, whose acquaintance Wiggins had picked up at one of those Parisian clubs to which moneyed foreigners obtain such easy access. The oily American and the two French nobles had frequently dined with Wiggins of late, and had always met at his table that venerable Duc de Pontbrisé, whose conversation, at once festive and polished, sparkled with those recitals of the "grand siècle" which are only to be found in the mouths of old nobles and in dictionaries of anecdotes.

The Duke appeared to have taken a great fancy to Wiggins, and it was touching to behold how Wiggins reciprocated that affection. Even as the party started now upon this boat trip, Wiggins could not restrain the impulses of his heart, which led him to offer his arm to the old Duke, as the latter made his way to the seat in the stern, and then to cover up his grace's thin legs filially with a fur rug. But when the boat had glided into mid-stream, propelled by its four oars, what should the valiant but imprudent Duke do but stand up suddenly to admire the view of the forest on the heights above the river.

"Monsieur le Duc, I do beseech you not to stand up while the boat is moving," exclaimed Wiggins, in pathetic entreaty.

"Do not fear for me, my young friend," answered the Duke, paternally; "I cannot swim, but my feet are steady, and this scenery is really ——"

Heigho; before the incautious noble could get out the

adjective which was to qualify the scenery, a sudden lurch of the boat caused him to flounder headlong into the tide, the soles of his new boots swirling upwards like a pair of corks.

"Great heavens! can any one swim?" shouted Wiggins, in horror.

"No," chorused the oily American and the two Frenchmen.

"Then I can't either, but I'll hazard my life," yelled Wiggins, and he took a heroic header.

At this moment, however, a cry far out-topping the dismay of the previous shout sprang from the throats of the three men in the boat, for at St. Cloud the river takes a bend, and round this bend was seen a steamer from Paris bearing straight down upon the drowning Duke and the devoted Wiggins, who was clutching him by the hair.

Another three weeks and the scene is a sick room; the *dramatis personæ*: Wiggins in bed, with his head shaved, a sister of mercy, and two police agents.

One of the police agents has a painful communication to make: "Monsieur Gredon," he says, sympathetically, "you are well enough now to be told that you are in custody for desertion. You let out the fact that you were Charles Gredon while raving in fever, and the hotel people communicated with us."

Wiggins sighs, "You have not yet told me how I come to be here. I jumped into the river, but I am a good swimmer enough."

"Yes, but a steamer passed over you—luckily without hurting your old friend in the grey suit, who swam away and has never been heard of since."

"Never been heard of since!" bawls Wiggins, collecting his senses; "but he had a note-of-hand for two hundred thousand francs of mine, which my banker must have paid, and he called himself a Duke."

"Ah! there are plenty of Dukes of his sort in France," answers the police agent philosophically.

CHAPTER XVI.

INHERITANCE.

MONSIEUR LE DUC DE VIEUXMANOIR is dead, and a noble procession, nearly a mile long, is following his splendid hearse to the burial service. The Parisians in the streets bare their heads and stare with wonder at this pompous pageant in honour of a man who can have been neither statesman nor soldier, nor yet a popular hero, tribune, artist, or writer; for if he had been a statesman or soldier there would have been the usual military escort; if he had been a public celebrity hundreds upon hundreds of mourners would be attending him to his grave on foot; even if he had been a mere enriched Bourseman there would still be a deputation of stockbrokers and money-changers trudging reverentially through the mud with looks of sorrow. But there are no pedestrian mourners, save the one young man who is walking just behind the hearse with a mien of decorous seriousness, but with no affectation of grief. The other mourners are all in carriages, and a surprising show they make as coach after coach rolls by with four horses to each, and behind the coaches broughams without number, all flashing escutcheons and coronets from their panels, so that any spectator who was versed in heraldry might feel as if all the chapters of French history were going by him on wheels.

This is what undertakers call a first-class funeral. There is a forest of plumes on the hearse's roof; the eight horses are caparisoned in trailing velvet, with coronets blazing luridly in red and blue at the corners, and the church, where the procession stops, is draped outside and in with acres of black cloth

edged with silver fringes, and looped up into festoons by means of hatchments and huge black shields with the letter "V" on them.

It takes a full hour and a half to get through the grand service that is celebrated by a countless array of priests, choristers, burning tapers, and incense, and then another hour before the congregation filing by in twos and threes can sprinkle holy water on the catafalque. But when this is done there is nothing more to perform, for the Duc de Vieuxmanoir is not to be buried in Paris, but will be taken to the railway station, and thence to the vault in the chapel of his estate. So at the church door the mourners separate, each going his way and whispering chiefly about the fine law-suit that will shortly commence between the Duc de Vieuxmanoir's heirs.

For there is to be a law-suit ; and if we would learn its origin it is no use consulting bystanders, or even referring to those private chronicles of society, known only to the initiated and talked of mysteriously in the intimacy of drawing-rooms. The story is one which only the family notary could tell—a story of hopes stacked up one by one with patient ambition and energy for years, and then all blown down in a day. So we must suppose ourselves indebted to the lawyer for the following joyless narrative : The Vieuxmanoirs, then, were a mighty family, who before the Revolution owned an estate which was like a small kingdom. To be marshals of France, lieutenant-generals of their provinces, knights of the Holy Ghost, Secretaries of State, cardinals, archbishops, captains of the King's Guard, was the natural lot of one generation of Vieuxmanoirs after another, and there was not an office under Government in which one of their minor kinsmen or nominees was not securely ensconced, drawing his emoluments with a serene quietude, and putting down interference with a high hand.

At the meeting of the States-General in 1789 it was not expected that the Vieuxmanoirs would show much anxiety to get this state of things reformed ; nor did they. They intrigued

and voted with great spirit against all progress whatsoever ; and when on the night of the 4th of August, 1789, the privileges of the nobility were abolished wholesale, they emigrated in a dudgeon to Coblenz, trusting that the Prussians and Austrians would come and help them to put things straight. The Germans did not put things straight ; the Revolution proceeded and the National Convention, which had a humorous sense of justice, laid the Vieuxmanoirs between the alternative of returning to France and being guillotined as aristocrats, or staying away and having their lands confiscated. The Vieuxmanoirs chose the less tragical evil of confiscation, whereon their lands went to the hammer, and the larger part of them was knocked down for a song to a Republican attorney, who had saved money and had a fine pair of lungs to convince the people that he was one of the down-trodden multitude, like themselves.

It was a mere accident that the Castle of Vieuxmanoir did not go along with the lands ; but perhaps the attorney feared that the sincerity of his Republicanism might be doubted if he established himself behind a moat and a portecullis ; or perhaps he reflected that if the Vieuxmanoirs ever returned when the guillotining days were over, an action for ejection might lie more easily against him in that castle than out in the fields among the corn and beetroots.

Anyhow, when the Vieuxmanoirs came back to France on the accession of Napoleon I., they found themselves in the position of many other late exiles ; that is, their house and a narrow girdle of wood and pasture land remained at their disposal, but the bulk of their property was alienated for good and all. Nor was it possible to eject the attorney. His opinions having kept step with the march of events he was now an Imperialist Count and senator—a man in high honour, and much respected for his Conservative principles ; besides which he had his deed of purchase to show, and Bonaparte had decreed that all such deeds should remain binding.

So the Vieuxmanoirs had to make the best of their ruin. They

settled down moodily under the shadow of a spick-span new mansion which the attorney-Count had built—a mansion which seemed to grin at them whenever they rode outside their narrow grounds, and, refusing all office or emoluments from the new *régime*, they let themselves be counted as men of nought on the domain where they had formerly ruled.

But their troubles were not at an end, for the old Duke had a bevy of sons and daughters, such as a *seigneur* might rear without scruple in the days of primogeniture and patronage, and now, by the new Code Napoléon, he must divide his property in shares among his children, so that the castle, which was worth two-thirds of the whole estate, would have to be sold at his death into the hands of strangers. By what prodigies this desecration was averted would have formed good matter for a novel, or for a penal indictment under the testamentary-collusion clauses of the new Code.

One daughter was persuaded to take the veil, two others were married, reluctantly, but of necessity, to rich *parvenus* who consented to accept them dowerless, but who executed contracts “*en reconnaissance de dot*”—that is, endowed them with the equivalent of their heritages, and so covered the responsibility of the father. As to the sons, two of them chivalrously signed acts of renunciation and emigrated to America. They were of the old noble blood, these two, and counted the family name before everything. Another was drowned before he had yet made up his mind to be disinherited; one younger brother alone, tainted with the leprosy of modern ideas, refused to forego his part of the property, and it was not without trouble that he was brought to endorse an arrangement by which he should live in the castle together with his elder brother, having a whole wing to himself, and drawing half the revenues of the land under a partnership. But perhaps the Fates were incensed against this degenerate scion of an old race, for they crushed him under a falling oak before his father died; so that in due course the next Duke, whom we may call Duc Hercules—for nobles had mythological

names then—succeeded to the whole property, all codes to the contrary notwithstanding.

And then it looked as if a bright time were going to dawn for the Vieuxmаноirs. The Bourbons returned, and brought back an hereditary House of Peers with laws of primogeniture and entail; Charles X. did better by coaxing from the Legislature an indemnity of a milliard francs (£40,000,000) for the despoiled *émigrés*, and of this sum Duc Hercules received a million francs, which helped him to buy back a fair slice of land put up to auction at the death of the attorney-Count, who had not taken the precaution of entailing his property. Assuredly Duc Hercules must have thought that this revival of old times would endure for ever, when the Revolution of 1830 burst forth like a gale, sweeping hereditary peers, primogeniture, and entail, all into limbo, and setting up the Civil Code once more. There was no hoping again after this blow. Whatever was to be done in the way of securing the whole of the Vieuxmanoir property for the eldest born must be effected in the full consciousness that the Civil Code would not be abrogated yet awhile, and that its provisions must be submitted to or evaded by most vigilant finessing.

Of course Duc Hercules resolved to finesse, and happily the Church Catholic was at hand to sustain him in this resolution. His two sons were brought up at home by priests, his daughters were sent to be educated in a convent; and three out of the four children were thus schooled patiently, persistently, and saintly in the belief that their honour in this world, and maybe their salvation in the next, depended on entire subserviency and self-denial towards their eldest brother. In the young ladies this schooling bred ecstasy: so as soon as they were of age to vow, they became nuns and were no more heard of. As to the younger son, a lean and earnest young man, he so well imbibed the precepts of his teachers that he accepted a commission in some Catholic army—Tuscan, Papal, or what not—and met a gallant death fighting for the faith.

So when Duc Hercules died, Duc Clovis—for mythological names had become plebeian by this time—reigned in his stead, and he began his rule both with a wide estate and with a noble set of principles to help him to maintain it. Less despondent than Duc Hercules, Duc Clovis may have reasoned that nothing is perpetual here below, not even the institutions of an enlightened democracy, and that the day might surely come when Catholic Legitimism would be ready to take its *revanche* of 1789 and 1830, and when a Vieuxmanoir might hasten the consummation by dint of landed influence, and mount guard over the Church and throne when restored.

Duc Clovis had but one son, and on this boy he centred all his hopes. One must have seen the old Legitimists of France at work to understand the frenzy that possesses them. Rancour at the spoliation their fathers suffered, deep implacable hatred for the theories which led to that spoliation, hope of revenge in the future—all these things combine with religious zeal and caste vanity to make the noble Frenchman a land-grasping fanatic, and they did so in Duc Clovis's case. With what frugal parsimony the Vieuxmanoir household lived, how nine-tenths of each year's savings were invested in the purchase of whatever rag of land was offered for sale in the neighbourhood, and how the other tenth was expended in buying back the Vieuxmanoir heirlooms—pictures, books, plate—which had been scattered at the Revolution, and which were continually cropping up in small lots at sales, need not be told at length. Enough, that when in 1870 Duc Clovis's son, the Prince de Grand'hoirie, reached his majority, he was heir to one of the most magnificent estates in France, and his father could afford to laugh—as he did laugh, and grimly—at the Code laws and novel customs which he and his fathers had brushed aside like so much rubbish. For all which it was without a murmur that the sturdy old noble put a rifle into the young Prince's hands, and told him to go and fight with the rest for his invaded country; and if his heart was crushed into water when the news arrived that the boy had been killed, his

tears were shed in secret, for no curious eye saw anything of them.

One would think that hope did indeed die now at Vieuxmanoir ; but this would be to misunderstand such a nature as a French Duke's. Childless and broken-hearted, but not daunted in his ambition for the greatness of his race, Duc Clovis called all his collaterals around him and made them an appeal. One of them would inherit the title ; let all the others yield their claims to him that he might be a prince among men, the chief of a great house, the trunk of a giant-spreading tree. Thus did Duc Clovis hold forth, and his speech might have touched a ton of stones, as he alluded to the privations he had himself endured, to his hopes and prayers, and to his now brimming sorrow. But the collaterals were not stones, and talking to them was as if Duc Clovis had simply gone into a field and whistled to the four winds of heaven.

In a word, they refused ; and it is comforting to add that most of them had conscientious motives for not waiving the rights which the law had wisely established for their profit. This it was that killed Duc Clovis—the same who was borne to his rest in the manner above described, with all the collaterals behind him. A lawyer had told him that he might execute a deed of gift of his whole estate for that one among the collaterals who would inherit the title, and the Duke did execute such a deed, coming to Paris for the purpose. But the lawyer did not conceal that the deed would infallibly be set aside if attacked, and the Duke breathed his last trusting little in the abnegation of his collaterals.

And now you understand why there is to be a law-suit. The deed of gift is clearly illegal, and there are many clauses in the Code to meet it ; therefore it will be assailed, and that one heir who hoped to rear his head above the others will be sent out of court with just his due share of the inheritance and no more. Vieuxmanoir, with every stick, stone, and silver spoon it contains, will naturally be put up for sale ; so likewise will the lands, and,

please Fortune, there will soon be nothing left of those acquisitions which three Ducs de Vieuxmanoir accumulated with such plodding energy but contrary to the laws. With respect to Vieuxmanoir, it is too stately a place for the diminished incomes of these small days, but it is a most eligible building for manufacturing purposes. Our friend, M. Blagueferme, has been visiting it, and he hopes shortly to establish there a provincial factory for his Smoke-Jacks.

CHAPTER XVII.

LAW-SUITS AND SALES.

A LAW-SUIT about an inheritance is always a stirring matter, in France as elsewhere; and it is particularly so when the claimant to a large estate founds his title on a deed of gift *inter vivos*, and is pursued by a determined pack of counter-claimants, who have the law on their side and are resolved not to be frustrated of a centime. In such a juncture the claimant, if he be determined, too, and quite conscious that he has not an article of the Code to stand upon, may lead the co-heirs a dance, which, conducted by solicitors having a full sense of their mission, will last five years or more.

We have explained how M. le Due de Vieuxmanoir, wishing to transmit his whole estate to that one among his heirs who would succeed to the title, and who under the system of entail would have inherited the lands also, had, during his lifetime, drawn up a deed of gift, which an army of collaterals proceeded to assail as soon as the breath was out of his body. Having been nominally put in possession of the property before his uncle's death, the new Duke might have stood his ground and waited for an action of ejectment, then have dragged the counter-claimants from the Departmental Court to the First Chamber in Paris, thence to the Court of Cassation, and thence again to the Council of State, heaping up in the process adjournment after adjournment, filing cross bills to make the petitioners severally prove their pedigrees, and, in fact, wearying them with the innumerable intricacies of French procedure—so simple in theory, so tedious when cunningly

worked—until they gasped and were distraught. But the end to all these things is inevitably a bill of costs ; besides which, when a deed of gift closely precedes the death of the giver, the charge of undue influence, and even of foul play, may so plausibly be urged against the heir that a prudent Frenchman will not risk it.

From a suit *en captation d'héritage* a man comes out with diminished purse, perhaps with a sentence of imprisonment, but, at all events, with a blackened character. There is no offence, indeed, for which Frenchmen are so prompt and implacable in decreeing social ostracism as those connected with the law of inheritance ; and this is easy to account for. The Code and modern custom say, " Let all share alike ; " and deeds of gift, or other evasions of testamentary restrictions, would so surely lead to a revival of primogeniture heirships that ninety-nine hundredths of the nation are interested in belabouring any man who makes the slightest effort to bequeath or inherit otherwise than as the law ordains. The law, as a fact, does allow a testator to " advantage " one particular heir to the extent of one fourth of his whole property over and above the latter's legal share, and although this privilege is seldom made use of, the old Duc de Vieuxmanoir might have availed himself of it, and made his favourite heir's position pleasant. But he preferred the desperate expedient of the deed of gift, and thereby brought his heir within reach of the Code, which prohibits such deeds by enactments most explicit.

So the new Duke, after taking lawyers' opinion, and giving the matter his own best reflection, has been forced to see that his case is a bad one. The lawyers caution him that he must lose his money, and he is warned by the significant hum of society that he will certainly forfeit his reputation too ; so in the upshot he has decided that he will act more wisely in yielding and letting the inheritance go to auction in the usual way, just as if there had been no deed of gift at all. That is why the announcement has gone forth that the Château de Vieuxmanoir with all its

contents and dependencies is to be sold "by authority of justice."

The auctioneer's bills paper the walls of the old castle, other bills describing the lots to be sold glare on the walls of every barn and farmyard for miles around, and on the appointed day there is a fine mob of buyers collected in the banqueting-hall, where not a hundred years ago the serfs of the Vieuxmanoir estate would come and beg leave to be married, or kneel and pray for redress against the Duke's pigeons who ate their corn, his hares who devoured their vegetables, or his lackeys who beat them occasionally during his absence, or led their wives and daughters astray to make the time pass.

From one of the windows of this grand hall can still be seen the stone dove-cot, hated emblem of seigneurial rights, for this time a century ago none but lords durst keep pigeons; and farther off the not less hated mill, where, and where alone, the tenants took their corn to be ground, paying a tithe to the Church and a second tithe to the seigneur, and a half-tithe to the steward and another half-tithe to the miller, because the latter did the grinding gratis. And a little farther off by searching near the presbytery you might find the foundations of the gibbet which reared its stern granite head for centuries, proclaiming the right of the Vieuxmanoirs to administer "haute, moyenne, et basse justice." And hard by is the pond round which serfs squatted of a night and beat the waters with willow wands, to prevent the frogs from croaking, and disturbing the seigneur's slumbers. But all these have been mere relics for years past, and now before the sun sets the auctioneer's hammer will have dispersed all that remains of the Vieuxmanoir wealth among strangers, so that in a little while the very name of the great house will belong to tradition.

There are some twenty-five co-heirs to share the spoil, and each is represented by a notary, but most of them have also come in person to keep a watchful eye on the proceedings, and affect much emotion as the castle itself, the lands, and the different

heirlooms are scattered to right and left. There is not one of these co-heirs but calls himself "De Vieuxmanoir," and professes to have been willing in his heart of hearts to surrender all his claims if the other twenty-four would have done so ; and there is not one but would with his heart of hearts have fought out the war to the end if it had been sought to defraud him of a franc's worth. For all which, they style themselves Royalists, Papists, and haters of '89 to a man, for it is noteworthy that many of the keenest contemners of the new order of things are those who profit with most alacrity by its provisions in the ordinary transactions of life—men who, being younger sons, would be roaming over the world as adventurers if primogeniture still prevailed, and who would look extremely queer if the principles they so unctuously advocate were suddenly restored with retroactive effect.

Whether these men are the happier for being small annuitants instead of adventurous *cadets de famille* is another question ; and perhaps one had best say of primogeniture that if all logic is against it all expediency is in its favour. In old times young Frenchmen of birth who were cast loose to sink and swim went off and colonised Louisiana, Canada, and fought under Dupleix and Lally-Tollendal against the English for the Empire of India. Nobody pretended then that the French were bad colonists. Like Englishmen nowadays, they could wander over the seas and find their language, manners, and institutions securely thriving wherever they had set foot ; and the tenacity with which French customs have survived in Canada to this day proves what modern Frenchmen might have continued to do in the way of peopling and civilizing waste lands if the exodus of their adventurers had not been stopped short. Nor can one do otherwise than regret, in the interests of the new States everywhere springing up, that it should have so stopped ; for America and Australia would be none the worse if the English and German elements in them were tempered with a dash of those qualities which old-time Frenchmen used to

impart—graceful polish, artistic ingenuity, clever thrift, and ever-smiling cheerfulness.

As it is, Frenchmen are rapidly losing the virtues which distinguished them as adventurers now that their Code has converted them into the humdrum, stay-at-home people which nature never intended them to be. Families like those of these collateral Vieuxmanoirs everywhere abound, having just enough to live on by dint of parsimony, and forming in the aggregate a selfish, idle, and unprofitable class, addicted to hoarding money, and devoting any higher qualities they may possess to intrigues for small Government posts or to peevish criticisms of the *régimes* which refuse to employ them. If they could only have retained their cheerfulness and good sense through it all, there might be some compensation, but too much politics is making them dull and cross.

However, we are not in this old hall to sentimentalize, but to watch the crowd of folk stream in and mass themselves round the table which serves as a platform to the auctioneer. Look at that American who is rapping the oak panelling of the wainscot with his be-ringed middle finger. He has come to find out whether the purchaser can acquire the title along with the estate, for, if so, he would buy up the whole place in a block, family pictures and all. Near him you get an English wine-merchant who wants to buy the vines which he has heard yield a good fruity vintage. Add a percentage of sugar and alcohol to this fruity vintage, boil the whole in china jars to give it the mellow taste of age, and you have just the sort of fine old Burgundy to which the British consumer is accustomed.

Opposite this pair you may see an agent of the Tobacco *Régie*, who has orders to bid for two hundred acres of the estate well suited for a tobacco plantation. The *Régie* tried to buy these acres during the late Duke's lifetime, but were sent about their business, and so likewise was yonder agent of the "Bande Noire," that famous company which purchases lands wholesale when "bargains" are to be had, and sells them in little lots at a profit of

twenty or thirty per cent. And M. Blagueferme, of the Smoke Jack Improvement Company, is there also, standing quite close to the auctioneer, who seems aware that he means business, for he glances at the acute gentleman in putting up the castle, its contents, and the whole estate in one lot for thirty million francs.

There is a general titter at this, for where is the Frenchman who can disburse capital to that amount? "Thirty million francs," repeats the auctioneer, with his head acock. "A fine castle, estate, picture-gallery, and plate, the accumulated wealth of ages, offered at thirty million francs. No bids?"

There are no bids, indeed, but a hush follows on the titter, and the auctioneer's hammer comes down. "No buyers for *Vieux-manoir* in block? Then I am instructed to sell in lots. First lot: The castle and furniture, without pictures, china, plate, or heirlooms; also the gardens, orchards, and park, covering seven hundred hectares of land. Six million francs?"

"Three millions," bids M. Blagueferme intrepidly.

"Three five," bids some one in the throng.

"Three seven," says the auctioneer.

"Three eight," repeats the voice.

"Four millions," cries M. Blagueferme in excitement, and the auctioneer raises his hammer: "Going at four millions—gone!" and it is as though this hammer with its bang had clenched the last nail in the late Duke's coffin, for now the glory of the *Vieux-manoirs* is truly gone for good and all.

After this, the sale proceeds briskly enough. The agent from the *Régie* gets his two hundred acres, the Englishman obtains his vines, the late Duke's farmers each buy as much of their farm-lands as they can afford, a railway company secures three lots wanted for a loop line, M. Blagueferme takes a hundred acres more to give himself a river boundary, and the "Bande Noire" walks off with the remainder. In less than two hours it is all over.

M. Blagueferme, the chief bidder, struts away with his solicitor, and with the flush of victory on him stands for awhile on the

marble terrace of the garden, inspecting his domain in the light of the setting sun. Of that villa among the trees, once used as a hunting-box, he will make his home and call it a château—for it is big enough for the purpose—and of the old castle itself he will make a factory, connecting it with the loop line of railroad, and with the river by a pair of tramways that will cut through the avenues of three-hundred-year oaks and slice some corners off the flower-garden and orchard, but this makes no difference. Then, on the outskirts of the park, M. Blagueferme will build a village for his workmen, and by-and-by there will be nothing to prevent his erecting a row or two of villas and shops for the tradesmen, professional people, and others who always crop up round manufactories, till, perhaps at no distant date, Vieux-manoir will become a town. It is a fine dream, and, though M. Blagueferme is not of a poetical mood, his heart warms somewhat as he conjures up the snorting of engines, the rumble of tram-trucks laden with improved Smoke-Jacks, the gliding of barges on that now glistening river, and the crowning prospect of ramshackle villas which a smart contractor will run up for him on easy terms, to house lawyers, doctors, justices, bailiffs, policemen, and undertakers—all persons who are the first fruits of civilization.

But the pictures and other articles of vertu have yet to be sold, and this closing act is performed in Paris at the sale rooms of the Rue Drouot. Here again the heirs are present either in person or by deputy; but they do not bid much, for the pictures fetch prices beyond the stretch of any French purse not being a banker's. Dealers with hook noses are there, and rich foreigners, English, Russian, and American, who for years past have been carrying out of France all the art gems worth having; and the Fine Arts Superintendent is there too, wishing, maybe, that he had the *carte blanche* which his predecessor, Count Nieuwekerke, enjoyed during the Second Empire.

So the sale proceeds, and when the last of the pictures, not being a family portrait—has been disposed of, and when the

china, plate, statuettes, coins, suits of old armour, and what not, have gone too, there comes something like a waking up among the heirs who battle over the articles which have no great intrinsic value, but which will do to keep as mementoes. Of these are the portraits, the household property with coronets and escutcheons, and the books to the number of several thousands, neither old enough nor yet new enough to buy for a public library. And then nothing remains but a lot of small useless things which can be of no use even to heirs, and which form a strangely faded and tawdry pile on the table beneath the auctioneer's desk. There are family letters, toys of children long aged and dead, the bridal wreaths of duchesses who were young fifty, a hundred, and two hundred years ago, the locks of hair cut off the young heads of Vieuxmanoir daughters who took the veil, and the soiled uniform of the young Prince de Grand'hoirie, who fell fighting under Charette on the Loire.

The room is half empty when the auctioneer, looking with compassion at this unmarketable lot, says, "A hundred francs ;" whereon an heir, moved with some pity too, answers, "Two hundred."

But at this moment the erect figure of an old man seems to break through the ring of loitering speculators, and, looking the heir in the face, this old man says, "One thousand francs."

"Two thousand," retorts the heir, fidgeting in his black clothes and reddening, and amid the wondering murmurs of the bystanders the poor lot rises to five thousand francs, when the old man raises his voice and says firmly, "Ten thousand."

There is no bidding against such a maniac as this. The heir stares at him abashed ; the lot is knocked down, and the auctioneer, stooping to ask the buyer's name, hears in reply—"My name is De Vieuxmanoir."

This old man is, in truth, a collateral Vieuxmanoir, whose claims would have been as good as those of the others had he chosen to urge them, but he has kept aloof looking upon the partition of the property and its sale as a desecration. To buy

this lot he will be obliged to sell *Rentes* worth a third of his income, for he is poor, and lives in an out-of-the-way garret. But his garret will be the brighter to him for harbouring these waifs of a fallen house, which he would have rescued with his heart's blood, and of which he will remain the last faithful and affectionate guardian.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HIGH-LIFE POLICE.

THE Police side is a side of Parisian High Life which, as a Frenchman once said of a charge of murder brought against him, is somewhat delicate. To what lengths a Government is justified in going in order to frustrate the secret machinations of its enemies is a point which may excite diversity of opinion, but which in the main will have to be left to the discretion of those most interested—that is, to the men in power; and Frenchmen in power have long ago had the discretion to decide that they may go any lengths. We have all heard of the “Cabinet Noir,” established for the opening of suspicious letters, and it has been a principle with every successive Government to declare that this useful but unpopular branch of the Post Office became obsolete with the demise of the Government preceding. But as fast as one *régime* was swept away, the Republic or dynasty that came after treated the world to volumes of “Correspondence,” wisely calculated to affect the credit of the exiled *régime*; and the “Correspondence,” which appeared after the Revolution of the 4th of September told us how snugly the “Cabinet Noir” had worked in Imperial days under the orders of M. Collet-Meygret—how M. Thiers’s letters were unsealed in it, how every envelope addressed to Opposition leaders or to unfriendly foreigners was held back till its contents had been thoughtfully studied; and, how in particular, long letters addressed by Count de Rémusat to the Countess had been forwarded for special perusal (they appear to have been very brilliant letters) to the Tuileries.

That the “Cabinet Noir” still flourishes no one doubts; but

politicians grow less simple every year, and those of them who care for secrecy have so many aliases for the reception of dangerous correspondence, that Government would be outwitted if it were not for its efficient staff of drawing-room *geais* who report upon the *grand monde* intrigues, cabals, and conspiracies, with a promptitude and a fidelity very admirable. These *geais* are a time-honoured institution, and, considering that every French Government has at least three formidable parties arrayed against it, and, to use M. Piétri's expression, "*se promène dans une avenue de bombes et de poignards*," it is difficult to see how Ministers could do without them.

While Louis XVIII. was dying, the two next Kings of France—Charles X. and Louis Philippe, then Comte d'Artois and Duc d'Orleans respectively—sat in a room adjoining the bed-chamber, and to while away the time discussed the functions of the police in a well-ordered State. According to the "*Memoirs of Madame Adelaide*," Louis Philippe's sister, the Comte d'Artois maintained that a King must have as many police-spies as guardsmen about him; the Duc d'Orleans held that a virtuous monarch could do without spies at all, and, when his turn came to rule, he actually tried to protect himself with his sole virtues for two years, with this result, that he had four insurrections to quell, and was within an ace of succumbing to a Legitimist conspiracy which had been formed to kidnap him in his grounds of Neuilly and carry him bodily out of the country.

It is not enough, however, for a Government to desire to employ the services of *geais*; it must possess the durability which is necessary to attract these valuable birds and an expert fowler to keep them well in hand, once decoyed. When Fouché was dismissed from his police-ministership by Napoleon, his successor, Savary, found the department hopelessly out of gear. The subordinate detectives were all at their posts; but Savary was aware that Fouché had had some three hundred *grand monde* agents in his pay, and of these he could find no trace, nor was it until the end of two years that all the *geais* had gathered confidence enough

to come back of their own accord and work under the new man's orders. The police arrangements have always been dependent for their success on the energy and adroitness and, above all, on the stability of one or at most two men at the prefecture; and that is why the Prefect of Police is the functionary who always retains office longest in France. Louis Philippe had but two prefects—M. Gisquet and M. Delessert; Napoleon III., after the proclamation of the Empire, three—the brothers Piétri, and M. Boitelle; and even under the more or less stable rule of the Republic there have been far fewer Prefects of Police than Ministers of the Interior.

It would be difficult, indeed, to furnish the names of High Life *mouchards*; for no compromising lists of names or notes whatsoever are left about. The *geais* are ladies and gentlemen in society who must feel secure against exposure, and whose names are known to none but the one or two officials with whom they hold intercourse. When a clever prefect has been in office for sometime he gets his mechanism into a state of good order that makes the French police the best in the world for political matters—though, as regards the repression of ordinary crimes, the scores of stabbed corpses that figure on the slabs of the Morgue every year, and whose murderers are never discovered, would seem to indicate a little laxness somewhere. But one cannot expect everything.

And now how do the *geais* or *geaies*—for, as we have just remarked, they are of both sexes—ply their vocation? It is not unfrequent to hear it said in French society of some man who is generally disliked as a pushing, prying fellow, “It est de la police;” and if we listened to that audite novelist, M. Paul Féval, who wrote the *Mystères de Londres* before he had visited England, one might suppose the High Life spy to be a person who haunted the Rue de Jerusalem at strange hours—rushing in with muffled face, or, if a lady, with veil down, and heart throbbing for fear of being seen. The prefecture is never so tactless as to expose its votaries to these inconveniences; and, as to those

unlucky persons who are suspected and avoided socially as if they were lepers, it may be safely stated that they could not obtain employment as police agents if they offered their ears for it.

Watch that little brougham gliding at a rapid pace amid the mazes of fiacres and victorias, and pulling up towards the hour of grand mass at a fashionable church. A little woman steps out, dainty, pretty, and holding a missal in her hand. It is Madame de Finemouche, whom you have met a dozen times at balls and dinners this winter, and who is the wife of M. de Finemouche, that highly respectable man, who has no profession, but is decorated, and lives on his means. Madame bows smilingly to you, trips over the flags, and glides into the church; while her coachman wheels round and takes his stand opposite, waiting till mass is over. But if you follow Madame de Finemouche, you will see her, after she has dipped her glove-tip in the holy-water shell, glance round, skirt one of the aisles as if she were looking for a seat, and when she has reached the east door, slip through it, hail the first passing cab, and drive to a house nowhere near the prefecture.

Of the concierge she asks no questions, but quickly ascends the staircase and rings at a door with a professional plate on it—a plate with the name of a doctor, dentist, lawyer—any profession, in short, liable to frequent visits. She is not delayed in the ante-room, for the hour is hers by appointment; and a bland gentleman, of perfect manners, comes forward to meet her and give her a chair.

“I have important news to-day,” she says, after the usual compliments; for, whatever be their calling, French people never forego their self-respect, and treat each other with most soothing deference. “I was at Madame de Rosethé’s ball the night before last, and heard several Royalist deputies talk about the situation. They think the time has arrived to make a grand effort to overthrow the Republic. They want the Comte de Paris to issue a manifesto, and I heard it said that the Comte de Réséda had pre-

pared the draft of a proclamation, which a deputation means to take to the Prince, with a request for his signature."

The urbane gentleman nods, and Madame de Finemouche, after a pause for breath, proceeds:—"Then I was at Madame d'Austerlitz's last night, and saw all the Bonapartists in great force. The Prince d'Austerlitz, who thinks I take a great interest in young Prince Victor, told me they meant to begin agitating for a plébiscite before long. The Republic, he said, can't last, and France can only be saved by a popular vote. In order that this vote may be in Prince Victor's favour, a new secret Imperialist committee is to be formed, with the view of working the provinces."

Again the urbane gentleman nods encouragingly, but says nothing.

"And now," adds Madame de Finemouche, "I suppose you know that Mademoiselle de Glaceblanche is to marry M. de Gommerose—a most splendid marriage, for it will place almost a quarter of a Department in M. de Gommerose's hands, and he is a Monarchist who grinds his teeth at the mere name of Republic. Then the Duc de Sangbleu will stand for his Department at the next election, and he told Madame de Réséda that he would do anything—conspire if need be—to knock over the present state of things; and I think M. de Sangbleu will marry a cousin of Madame de Réséda's, though I am not sure yet, for there's a doubt about the dower being sufficiently large. And, by the way, I must tell you that young M. Sanson, who has not a centime he can call his own, has begun to run a phaeton, and Madame de Mignonnette thinks he has smitten the only daughter—a most ugly thing, who squints—of M. Potiron, the manufacturer, who has just bought a share in the *Gazette des Boulevards*. This is worth knowing, for young M. Sanson has a very long head, and I know he is ambitious."

This time the polite personage draws out a notebook and jots down the name of M. Sanson, Madame de Finemouche stroking

the back of her missal meanwhile very gently and demurely as if it were a cat.

"You see, I have been active," she observes when the jotting is over; "but I have not done yet, for I must warn you to beware of M. de Furet, of whom I spoke to you the other day. He seems to have become mad in the cause of the Imperialists; and I believe he has a mission to distribute songs and pamphlets for them in the provinces. He is the most biting, resolute, and dangerous man I know, and you may depend on it he will do you an ill turn if not put under surveillance."

"We will see to him," replies Madame de Finemouche's interlocutor, quietly. "And now, I suppose?"—but here his question is conveyed rather by gesture than by word, for he draws forth a few bank-notes, which Madame de Finemouche eyes with affection, remarking innocently, "Yes, my month will be due next Sunday; I may as well take it to-day."

The notes are tendered, and the personage proceeds civilly: "We should like you to confine yourself principally to the Royalists. You are not committed flagrantly to the Imperialists, are you?"

"Well, I always wear violets on my dresses when I go to Madame d'Austerlitz's," responds Madame de Finemouche pensively, "and I can say they all place the utmost reliance on me; but I can go over by degrees and let Madame de Réséda think she has converted me."

"Yes, do that if possible, and look after Madame de Réséda and her friends; and now thanks for your zeal."

At which Madame de Finemouche rises, and is escorted with infinite respect to a door opposite to that by which she entered, and which gives exit into a different street. Her last words as she takes leave of her generous interviewer are, "Above all, beware of Monsieur de Furet."

She has not been gone half an hour when there is another knock at the door of the professional apartment, and the servant—a commonplace looking man, who has no politic physiognomy—

introduces a male visitor, alert, gallant, well dressed, with moustache well waxed and hands fresh gloved—the type of a dashing, prosperous Bonapartist. He sports the Imperial tuft, and you would only have to put him in uniform, with a sinuous cocked hat on, to revive one of those well-known figures who clanked their spurs through the Paris of the Second Empire.

“How do you do, Furet?” says the bland personage, extending his hand, and M. de Furet takes the chair which Madame de Finemouche has just vacated.

“I have plenty of news,” says he, breezily; “in the first place, there was a rumour that Mademoiselle de Glaceblanche was to marry M. de Gommerose, but there’s not a word of truth in it; Gommerose himself told me so. Then people are talking a good deal about that young Sanson, and they laid a Mademoiselle Potiron—a very pretty girl with fine blue eyes—at his door; but he’s too much of a muff to pick up such a match. The phacton he has begun to run comes from a grandmother who has left him twenty thousand francs; and he is taking the gilt off his money, that’s all.”

“Were you at Madame de Réséda’s the other night?” inquires the polite personage.

“Yes, and heard some deputies prattle,” rejoins M. de Furet; “but there’s no go in any of them. They don’t know what they’re about; all they are agreed upon for the present is the necessity of keeping tolerably quiet. The Bonapartists are as limp as ever; but, by-the-by, I must caution you against a little woman whom I spoke about the other day—Madame de Finemouche, a very termagant in silk. She seems mad about the Bonapartists, and I suspect does a great deal of pamphlet distributing for them down at her husband’s place in the country. To hear her talk of young Prince Victor was capital fun the other evening; but I advise you to have her watched, for there seems to be the fire of fanaticism under those dark eyes of hers. You must have seen her in society—a compact little woman, all nerves and interjections?”

"I have never seen her," answers the polite personage with interest, "but I will take care she is watched. And now I suppose?"—saying which he gracefully fingers bank-notes as before, and M. de Furet replies, "Yes, my month is due on Sunday; I may as well take it now."

"Thank you for your news, then," continues the polite personage, who, after a few words of instructions, shows his visitor to the door of exit; M. de Furet's last impressive admonition being, "Above all, beware of Madame de Finemonche."

And now, if any French taxpayer would contend that his secret-service money is not well expended, he must be difficult to please. •

CHAPTER XIX.

BOUDOIR CONSPIRACIES.

FRENCH ladies in High Life circles have at all times delighted to dabble in affairs of State. Under the Empire the coterie of feminine friends surrounding the Empress Eugénie was for ever intriguing and seeking to influence the march of events, and many men who became conspicuous in those times were indebted to their wives for their exalted station. The third Napoleon, so reserved and taciturn with his subjects of the sterner sex, brightened up and allowed his tongue full rein as soon as a lady approached him. She might have asked an important favour on the strength of her good looks alone ; but if she happened to be witty as well her cause was doubly gained.

When the Second Empire collapsed it was certainly most acutely mourned by its feminine partisans. The masculine politician has opportunities for turning his coat, and may often re-enter the arena by a different door ; but revolution deals at times most unkindly with his lady friends. A Republic, with a bourgeois President and no Court is scarcely adapted to the sway of feminine influence, and many a lady of rank finds—"after the fashion of Othello—her favourite occupation gone.

Resignation, however, is scarcely a feminine virtue ; and as "Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do," political *élégantes*, regretting their departed influence, are apt to become conspirators. We all know that conspirators, both male and female, are habitually sanguine-minded people, and in the feminine case they are usually gifted with romantic natures, so there is nothing surprising in the fact that Madame la Princesse

d'Austerlitz considers it quite possible—nay, highly probable that before long a repentant and dutiful people will robe Prince Victor Bonaparte in the Imperial purple. It follows as a natural consequence, that whenever the bright day she hopes for arrives it ought to find the Prince's partisans fully prepared; and so Madame d'Austerlitz and her friends, Mesdames de Sabretache, de Pomponnette, and de Lestincelle, have organised a ladies' committee, which proposes to offer Prince Victor a charger and saddle, to the presumable end that he may ride thereon in triumph, the very first time he reviews the new Imperial guard.

Now it is all very well for the Princesse d'Austerlitz to spend her leisure in political conspiracy, for her husband was a great dignitary under the Second Empire, and she herself exercised vast influence at the Court of the Tuileries; so that neither of them can be expected to look with the eye of favour upon a *régime* which counts them for nothing. The Princess is rich, too, and powerful; few people dare to snub her; and to arrest either herself or her husband, as is done with dangerous persons who bawl "Vive l'Empereur!" in the streets, would be out of the question. Besides, her husband approves of her conspiring, and that is enough.

But the case is somewhat different with Madame de Sabretache, whose husband, poor Colonel Sabretache, has no taste for plotting against established Governments under pretence of buying chargers. This M. Sabretache loved the Emperor of course—he was paid and promoted to do so; but he likes the Republic too, and has accepted the command of a regiment from her, with a friendly shake of the hand and an exhortation to be faithful from the late M. Gambetta's friend, the renowned General de Galliffet. The shake of the hand from M. de Galliffet was in particular very gratifying to Colonel Sabretache, and at heart he cannot really see that France is so much the worse for the exit of the Bonapartes. His cigars taste as well as they did formerly, his absinthe has not deteriorated, and as to the scarcity of balls and

parties, of which Madame de Sabretache so piteously complains, the colonel is ready to swear that madame does not spend six evenings at home throughout the winter season, and that her dressmaker's bills have by no means kept step with the alleged diminution of trade profits.

So it ruffles the feelings of this man of duty to find his wife driving about Paris all day with subscription lists in her hands, returning home jaded for dinner, with piles of muslin or satin violets in her brougham, and dashing away again before dessert is fairly on the table to vote resolutions round the tea-tray in Madame d'Austerlitz's boudoir. Then he meets curious forms of strangers on the staircase—seedy men putting coins into their pockets—and learns that these are earnest Bonapartists in reduced circumstances, who would pine away most miserably if they did not receive some little pecuniary assistance to help them to wait for the glorious day when Prince Victor is to assume the purple. Moreover, going out one morning he notices a queer-looking person pacing on the pavement, and guesses by the cut of him that he must be a detective set to watch the house. This, however, is too much to be borne, and with a flaming face Colonel Sabretache turns back, clambers up his staircase, and intercepts his wife just as she is sallying forth bravely attired, gloved, and bonneted.

"Where are you going, my dear?" he asks, with the air of a man who is determined to show all the moral courage there is in him for once in a way.

"Oh, don't stop me, please," answers the lady with a busy gesture; "it is to-day we are going to see the charger we've bought; such a beauty you never saw—all white with a pink nose."

"I don't see the use of that pink-nosed charger," answers the colonel, with reckless emphasis, as he takes up his position on the hearthrug.

"Not see the use of him? Why, he's meant to ride on, and will have a purple velvet saddle-cloth!" exclaims Madame de Sabretache, her blue eyes circling with astonishment: "he's the

horse that Victor the First will mount when he determines to save this nation ! ”

“ But, my dear,” responds the colonel, stamping his foot to make him feel himself more valiant, “ do you think France is anxious to be saved by that young stripling ? ”

“ Stripling, indeed ! ” pouts Madame de Sabretache, as if here now were a blasphemy such as she had never heard before. “ Why, I am surprised at you ; it is his destiny to be the rightful master of you and me and all of us ; he is also a most lovable young man, with eyes just like his mother’s, that dear good Princesse Clothilde ! ”

“ Yes, his mother is a charming person, and so is he, and they’re a charming family,” ejaculates the colonel, impatiently ; “ but it comes to this—I don’t want to be cashiered as a conspirator. There’s a detective down below, and one of these days you may find half a dozen of them upstairs. Pay your subscription for this horse if you like, but as to your going to see him, I—I—in fact, I won’t have it.”

These are courageous words, and an agitating silence follows their delivery. Then Madame de Sabretache throws herself on the sofa, in tears, most natural under the circumstances, and is heard bitterly sobbing, “ I know what it is, you want to break my heart ; but I’ll go into a convent, and never be seen again. I cannot live to face the day when all the little boys will point their fingers at you in the streets, and say, ‘ That’s the man who was unfaithful to his Emperor ! ’ ”

The colonel casts a mild expletive in the direction of the coal-scuttle, and stalks out routed. A few minutes later madame, having dried her eyes, speeds away, not towards the convent, but to see the pink-nosed charger as if nothing had happened.

The colonel, however, though repulsed with ignominy as a man must needs be who meddles in matters too high for him—the colonel strides off to Tortoni’s, and there meets his friend Colonel Pomponnette sadly chewing a *londrès*, and looking as melancholy as himself. Pomponnette, and Sabretache are both in the same

predicament ; that is, Pomponnette has been smitten, too, hip and thigh, in trying to stare that pink-nosed gift horse in the mouth ; and the two, comparing notes, look as dejected a pair of troopers as any to be seen in Paris. So dejected, in truth, that young Colonel de Cassecarreau, coming in to breakfast and happening to catch sight of them, laughs, accosts them, and inquires pleasantly, "What's up?"

There is no reason why these two colonels should conceal anything from Cassecarreau. He is a man of the world, very companionable, and, though he did rise so fast to his colonelcy through drawing-room influence in MacMahon's time, he is just the man to give valuable advice as to how ladies should be managed. So Sabretache and Pomponnette pour out their dismal souls to him, omitting nought nor setting down aught in malice ; but sighing frequently in the pauses of their narration, as if all their words were so many grinder teeth being drawn.

Having heard their story, Cassecarreau laughs anew, and says : — "Do you really want to prevent those ladies from ever dabbling in politics again ? If you do I'll furnish you an infallible specific."

Both the colonels declare they would pay francs unnumbered for the specific, and hereat Cassecarreau suggests a breakfast upstairs to arrange everything in secret and carefully. The breakfast takes place, and a long, cheery one it is. The waiter flashing in with the dishes can overhear the words "Vincennes," "imprisonment," "terror," "tears," &c., and the three colonels appear to grow merrier and merrier over these unmirthful substantives. Nothing can exceed the hilarity of their features as they separate by-and-by on the steps of Tortoni's, Cassecarreau saying, "Leave it all to me," and the other two replying, "Au revoir, à minuit."

That night towards twelve o'clock Madame de Sabretache, coming home from the Princesse d'Austerlitz's, is in good spirits and a forgiving mood, for she noticed that her husband was humble, not to say penitential, during dinner, offering no further

objections to the pink-nosed horse, and leaving her quite free as usual to spend her evening where she pleased. If he were at home, she would generously pardon him for his unmanly outburst in the morning, but he happens to be out, and she is just conning over the indulgent things she will say to him on his return, when she is startled by an ugly knock at the door.

A most peremptory knock it is, sharp and short, a thing calculated at midnight to make one's blood freeze. All the servants are gone to bed except madame's maid, so it is this timid young person who goes to open the door on the landing, and as soon as she has turned the key utters a panic-stricken shriek. At the same time four bearded men, stepping through the vestibule, pass into madame's room, and the foremost of them says, lifting his hat, "Madame, we arrest you in the name of the law."

"Arrest me!" gasps Madame de Sabretache, her tongue cleaving to her palate in very horror.

"Arrest you for conspiring the overthrow of the Government—that is, for treason," continues the bearded man, firmly. "You will please to come with us at once, for we have orders to convey you to Vincennes."

To attempt to describe the ghastliness of the scene would be a vain work. If fainting could be of any use, madame would swoon at once; if screaming could avail, she would throw open the windows and awaken the neighbourhood; but the four bearded men will not so much as let her change her dress. She must wrap herself up warm, and come off to the cab downstairs without a moment's loss of time: these are the orders, and madame obeys the orders in a state of collapse which would rend the hearts of any four real detectives who had to convey so pretty a woman to a fortress.

Happily these are not real detectives, but disguised officers, friends of that ingenious Colonel de Cassecarreau's; and right well they play their parts when the cab has landed Madame de Sabretache at a small house near the Fort of Vincennes, and where she is conducted upstairs to be interrogated by three other

officers in full uniform and spectacles. These officers do not conceal from her that it is the fixed purpose of the Government to have her court-martialled for her seditious doings, but they admit that she may yet be freed, if her husband will go bail for her being of good behaviour for the rest of her days.

Here might be a triumphant opportunity for poor Colonel Sabretache to decline going bail for any such thing until tears and supplications had softened his heart; but he is equal to the occasion at once and chivalrously consents. He pretends to have hastened after his wife with post speed as soon as he had heard of her arrest; and it is a pathetic spectacle enough when the honest fellow puts his pen to paper, and signs a declaration that his wife shall never more disobey him. The officers, however, stipulate for something more than this. They feel bound to warn madame that if she divulges aught of this matter, the Government will arrest her again, lest the rumour of their ill-timed leniency should act as a perilous incentive to other rebels.

But there is no fear of madame's betraying the secret, nor will Madame de Pomponnette, whose night has been made hideous by a similar adventure, betray it. We add with some concern that since this gloomy affair, young Prince Victor's cause has lost two most energetic supporters.

CHAPTER XX.

NOBLEMEN-OFFICERS.

IN the civilian walks of life nobles and *roturiers* are more or less at liberty to meet and mingle, or to avoid each other, as they please ; but in virtue of compulsory military service they are perforce brought together in the ranks of the army, and it is not of unimportance to inquire how they manage to live side by side.

When a nobleman enters the army as a private he usually does so as a one-year volunteer, passing the necessary examination with that object, and if his captain happens to be a man of title, as often happens, he is made as comfortable as is possible under the circumstances. He cannot, of course, avoid the nauseous *chambrée*, but whenever he has the opportunity, which is often, he leaves his *gamelle* to take care of itself, and feeds on the quiet in some decent restaurant. Then a year is soon over—all the sooner, indeed, thanks to frequent furloughs, which protection and influence obtain ; and, moreover, a young man, fresh to the world, finds it easier to overcome the prejudices of birth than many of his seniors would. Besides, he knows that there is no avoiding this one year's service, and so he usually nerves himself for the trial, and makes the best of a bad job.

In the ranks, indeed, noblemen and *roturiers* usually get on peaceably enough ; though, of course, the one year *volontariat* system cannot ever conduce to perfect harmony ; for the less educated men naturally regard with envy those comrades who, thanks to having passed an examination, are only called upon to perform a fourth of the usual term of service. The latter are, of

course, not exclusively nobles, but include all educated young men of *bourgeois* birth.

However, it is among the noble and the *roturier* officers that such ill-feeling of a class nature, as may exist in the army, is most predominant. There is, of course, no necessity for a nobleman to wear epaulets, but in very many families of rank it is a tradition, so to say, that, at least, one of the sons should become an officer. Formerly it was only the nobles who *could* become officers; as witness the Maréchal de Ségur's famous decision, requiring proof of four generations of nobility from all who wished to obtain commissions in the armies of the King. But the Revolution changed all this, and, now-a-days, the noble who seeks a commission, knows that he will find himself among *roturiers*, whom, moreover, he must often obey, that is, whenever their military rank is superior to his own.

He knows this, and yet he enters the army. It is true that, hoping to reduce the contamination to a minimum, he chooses if possible a cavalry regiment, for in the cavalry, as is well-known, men of his own caste most abound. Still there *are* Republicans and men of "low birth," even among the officers of the mounted troops, and, although in time of war, nobles and *roturiers* alike would no doubt display all necessary bravery, still, in time of peace, an amount of ill-feeling prevails between the two sets which is often highly detrimental to the interests of the service.

Some information on the subject of this ill-feeling may be obtained if we read the following correspondence relating to an event which has just convulsed the whole town of Bastionneau, where the 100th Regiment of Hussars is quartered. The first letter is from Captain the Marquis de Muguet, nephew of the Marquis de Roséthé, member of the Chamber of Deputies, and is addressed to that noble gentleman's wife, of whom we have had the pleasure to speak before.

"MY DEAR AUNT—Nothing could have given me greater delight than to accept your kind invitation to spend a fortnight in Paris,

but I am afraid that I may have to forego this treat, for I have had a duel ! Do not start or be alarmed, I am not hurt, only the merest scratch on the left arm, but the doctor insists that I shall stay in bed, and the colonel has added a prescription of his own, in the shape of a ten days' arrest, until the details of my scrape have been investigated.

" Perhaps, you will like to hear the whole story, for it has made a great noise here, and will make still more at the War Office ; it will also show you what pleasantries we officers have to contend against who have not the honour of being *roturiers* and Republicans.

" My adversary was Captain Buche of ours, who is not a bad fellow among the men of his own sort, but he rose from the ranks, has nothing but his pay to live on, and of course feels bilious against those who are better off. Mirliflor, Gommeblanche, and myself, form a kind of coterie apart, with one or two others of our own station and means, and I have had occasion to tell you in former letters what a sullen pceevish hostility is shown us by the parvenus.

" Buche and his set accuse us of being conceited and purse-proud because we mix with them as little as we can. But the truth is, it is they who have not education, manners, or money enough to feel comfortable with us ; and how can we help that ? Are we to drink bad beer because they can afford no better ?—to play whist at a centime a point, so as not to wound their vanity and their pockets ? And are we to think it a high honour, as they do, to be smiled at by *griselles* and servant-girls ?

" You will see how difficult is our position when I tell you that on coming to Bastionneat, we had a ten days' wrangle about the hotel where we should hold our messes and establish that compulsory club which people in high quarters seem determined we should maintain. Well, the parvenus wanted to go to the Queue de Bœuf, because it was a sort of tavern and cheap—the landlord offering breakfast and dinner for two francs and a half a day per head ; but Mirliflor, Gommeblanche, and I, saw no reason why we

should be poisoned because the process only cost fifty *sous*, and so we suggested the very rational arrangement that all the officers who liked should mess together at the Hôtel Royal, leaving the Queue de Bœuf to those who loved indigestion. Hereon, however, uprose a very howl about discipline, goodfellowship, class-arrogance, and the rest of it; and our colonel—who began his career under Bonaparte,* and whose family belong to the so-called Imperialist party—he has gone now, thank heaven!—growled that the captains had always messed together, and the lieutenants together, and that we should all be catered for by the Queue de Bœuf, to the greater glory of bad cookery and the (heinous) principles of '89.

"Well, the colonel could compel us to attend at the Queue de Bœuf, but no article in the Code empowered him to force its so-called savoury stews down our throats; so, by way of protesting, all our set would sit with closed lips without eating or speaking, while the others chewed their tough meat, and when this fraternal-banquet was over—and when no one could accuse us of having run counter to that precious 'egalitarianism—we would adjourn to the Royal, and have private dinners of our own—and capital dinners they were, I assure you.

"How all this would have ended, goodness knows; for our Bonapartist colonel was steeped in pipe-clay, up to the ears, but just then there was a popular outcry about so-called Imperialist officers still in command, and one of our new Governments, albeit, we were told, a very Red one, sent us a colonel of the proper kind. How he got his appointment I can't say, but, perhaps, your friend, M. de Galliffet, might know something of the matter. Well, at all events, he soon put the democratic-culinary nonsense to rights, and allowed my friends and me to fare as we pleased without submitting our *menus* to his sanction. This was sensible enough, but you will scarcely

* *I.e.*, Napoleon III. Thoroughbred Royalists, be it remembered, always call the Napoleons "Bonapartes," and speak of them as usurpers.—ED.

believe what bad blood it stirred among the *Queene de Bœuf* gentlemen, the more so, as there were other matters which put their noses out of joint.

“For instance, there is a *Cercle de la Noblesse* here, as there is in most provincial towns, and the committee very courteously offered to admit to honorary membership all those of our fellows who would have been eligible as ordinary members, under the statutes. Now, was it our fault if these statutes required authentic proofs of nobility? We could not as guests insist upon the club rescinding its rules, and yet it seems that under the Empire some silly regimental etiquette existed about noblemen-officers not frequenting clubs from which the other officers were excluded. You will readily admit that to encourage such a childish custom, dictated only by pure envy, would have been unworthy and ludicrous. With our new colonel’s full approval we brushed the etiquette aside, but with this result, that the corps of officers instantly split into two sections of irreconcilables—*blatant* and waspish on the one side, coldly polite on the other—and this brings me, my dear Aunt, to my famous duel.

“We had long seen that the powder scattered about us needed but a spark to produce an explosion, and this spark was struck after the punch feast which we gave the other evening to the officers of the 300th Foot, who were passing through the town. Before the Revolution the officers of one regiment welcomed brother corps with champagne suppers, but egalitarianism has brought us down to punch at five francs the bowl, and the 300th would have been stinted even of this economical liquor had not Mirliflor and I given the manager at our regimental club (a shocking institution which I, for one, seldom frequent) ten louis on the sly, with orders to do things generously and to say nothing about it. Well, the 300th swallowed our punch till it was time for them to go off to their billets, and then we Hussars all remained together pell-mell, *roturiers* and nobles cheek by jowl. It was then that, by way of saying something, and without meaning harm, I remarked aloud, but not addressing Buche: ‘What a

terrible thing it is to think that the Pope is still kept in prison. We must come to loggerheads with Italy soon or late about the spoliation of the Holy Father, and really it would be as well to have the scrimmage at once—a general set-to of the Catholic powers against the heretics. It would wipe off the disgrace of Solferino.’

“‘You forget, captain, that I fought at Solferino,’ retorted Buche, whom, I repeat, I had not addressed, but who thumped down his glass and glared at me. ‘You were quite right to fight, as you were ordered, captain,’ was my civil reply; ‘but if you were ordered to march against that man Humbert, the so-called King of Italy, I don’t suppose you would break your sword.’ ‘I hope I shall never receive so mad and unpatriotic an order,’ cried Buche, who I really think had taken too much of that punch, and several others of his clique chorussed after him, as if they had been pricked with bayonets: ‘France has shed enough of her blood for the Popes, and has got small thanks enough for it.’”

“‘Well, gentlemen, that may be your opinion, but it is not mine,’ I answered with all the moderation I could command—and, believe me, I had to exercise a great control over myself; but, as Buche still glowered and crunched his moustache, I added grimly, ‘Opinions are free, captain; and I am proud that I hold none of those set in fashion by the enemies of religion.’ ‘Who do you call enemies of religion?’ shouted Buche, starting up. ‘If you mean the Republicans, you were not so proud as all that when you accepted your Cross from M. Gambetta after but six weeks’ service in the army of the Loire.’”

“‘You forget, Captain Buche,’ I rejoined, ‘that if I obtained my Cross of the Legion of Honour after six weeks’ service, I was presumably thought worthy of it; and besides I was confirmed in possession of it by the Committee of Revision after the War, and I really owe it to the Committee, and not to the person you speak of.’ ‘You owe it to being a Marquis,’ retorted Buche, with a sneer; and hereupon losing all patience—as who would not when so provoked?—I answered, ‘Man for man, I prefer being a

Marquis to an Anarchist in disguise,' and, so saying, rose and flung my glove in his face. There was no healing such a business, so we met this morning at seven o'clock in a wood. He pinked me through the arm, I scratched him across the chest, and while he was on the ground apologized for having called him an Anarchist, which was not, perhaps, quite fair to the poor devil. But then between an Anarchist and a Republican the line of demarcation is so narrow that one may be excused for not seeing it through the fumes of punch.

"And so that is the pith of it, my dear Aunt. I of course wish no harm to Buche, but if my uncle speaks about this affair to our friends who are still labouring for the Restoration of the Monarchy, he would do well to insist on the trying position in which we of the Faubourg St. Germain stand towards men who would be much happier if they remained corporals and sergeants, as they would have done before the Revolution. These hostilities did not occur under the Bonapartes, for few of our people then entered the army; but my young brother writes to me from St. Cyr that even the cadets there are divided into two camps, who hate each other with all their souls. Surely this is a pitiful thing for France, and if *roturiers* cannot be excluded from St. Cyr, it would, at all events, be as well, if the King on his accession decided that honest but poor and vulgar fellows like this Buche of mine should not be raised to an eminence where they grow giddy and misconduct themselves. If I am discharged from arrest soon, I will try and hurry to Paris, and am, meanwhile, my dear Aunt,

"Your most affectionate Nephew,"

"RAOUL DE MUGUET."

A few days after the posting of the above this other letter was forwarded by Captain Buche to his father, half-pay Lieutenant Buche, living in a Burgundy village:—

"MY DEAR FATHER,—I had hoped to write to you at about this date that I had at last been gazetted to the Legion of Honour,

after waiting patiently for this favour for so many years, Instead of that I must muster courage to tell you that I have been ordered to exchange into a foot regiment, and to set off for Algiers. I am in disgrace for having fought a duel with the Marquis de Muguet, and in double disgrace for having uttered what are called seditious words over a punch table. In fact, if it had not been for the intercession of my adversary, I believe I should have been made to resign ; but in any case I must give up my hopes of Cross and promotion, and consider that I have lost some two years of service-time by what my colonel described, in reprimanding me, as my ‘envious, cantankerous spirit and subversive principles.’

“It would be a graceless thing to break out into invectives against Muguet, for he behaved gallantly, and, when he saw me in peril, with kindness : but although we live under the Republic, and have even (at least we are told so) a Republican Minister of War, there are still, at least in our cavalry regiments, a large number of nobles, who contrive somehow or other to carry all before them ; the more so, when the colonel is a disguised Royalist, as in our regiment of Hussars. Regimental life has become a dry and humiliating thing ever since they came among us. That is all I have the heart to add for the present.

“Your affectionate son;

“JEAN BUCHE.”

It will be seen from the foregoing that goodwill between noble and *roturier* officers, may, so far as the French army is concerned, still be classed among the *desiderata* of the future.

CHAPTER XXI.

MILITARY LADIES.

THERE is great animation in the barracks of the 75th Artillery brigade, quartered at Fortlobus, for the annual inspection by a general of division is going to take place ; and the 75th brigade want to outshine the 150th Foot and the 25th Hussars, quartered in the same town. The three corps have been at rivalry all the year for the good graces of the shop-girls of Fortlobus ; the officers have tried to outpace each other in the matter of punch -routs ; they have supported conflicting *prime donne* at the local theatre ; and there is among them just that nice flow of bad blood which keeps *esprit de corps* flourishing.

To tell the truth, though, the artillery have had the best of it. Since the infantry have been covered with hideous cloth shakos with yellow braid, and the light cavalry rigged out in heavy Prussian tunics and ruddy head-dresses like copper saucepans, the neat black and scarlet of the artillery has become the finest uniform in the French service—at least in women's eyes, and they must be accepted as supreme judges in such matters. Besides, the 150th Foot go over the parade-ground like a herd of calves in a high wind ; and the 25th Hussars, whose officers are divided as to politics and at war on military questions, are even worse. So much so, indeed, that at the last inspection the general swore that the troopers rode like clothes-pegs, that the horses were abominably groomed, and that there was not a troop in the whole squadron who could keep their dressing even at a trot.

The artillery among all these changes and disagreements have remained homogeneous. Their officers are well educated, and

belonging mostly to the same class (the upper *bourgeoisie*), have no pretexts for caste quarrels ; whence it ensues that discipline and efficiency are well maintained among them. So at the approach of the inspection old Colonel Clapoteau, having invited his officers to an admonitory lunch, stood up, glass in hand, and cried :—

“Here’s to the 75th, my friends ; and we’ll keep it up to the mark—*mille tonnerres !*” Whereat the officers drank the toast like one man, chorussing, “*Vive le colonel !*”

Now, you are aware that at the yearly inspections the colonel of every regiment makes out a list of his most deserving officers for promotion and appointment to the Legion of Honour. Promotion does not go wholly by seniority ; merit is taken into account ; and, this being so, it must needs be that the merits of subalterns are very often decided on by the colonels’ wives.

It so happens that Colonel Clapoteau has no wife, but he has a sister, a young widow of thirty or so, Madame de Vivebelle, who kindly discharges uxorial duties in regard to all that concerns the management of the colonel’s household and brigade. From the day when she came to live with her brother after the lamented death of her husband, General Baron de Vivebelle, Madame de Vivebelle indeed took entire command of the 75th brigade ; and officers who have any experience of military ladies know how uncommonly soon the complexion of a regiment is altered when it passes under feminine rule. The officers find themselves classed in categories which have nothing to do with military proficiency ; promotion and favours are showered on some for qualities and services which the Code ignores ; while grudges terribly implacable and ruinous fall upon others for no apparent reason whatever.

Well, Madame de Vivebelle had not been six months at the head of the 75th before one of these grudges fell like a blight on Captain Paraboule of the 1st battery, and one need scarcely add that Paraboule chanced to be out and out the best officer in the brigade. His battery was a model to all the others ; his gunners liked him and vied with one another to earn his approval, and his attainments were indisputably high, for he had passed first

out of the Polytechnic school, and might have gone on to the engineer staff had he pleased. With all this he was a well-looking fellow, modest, generous, and popular; and it was a wonder to his comrades that he should be in the bad books of such a pretty woman as Madame de Vivebelle, for as a rule the other sex eyed him with marked favour. And Madame de Vivebelle had begun by being favourable to him. For some months she honoured him with her errands; but one day, suddenly and unexpectedly as a thunder-storm, her anger broke out against him in a raging gust.

Soon after the outburst an inspection occurred, and Paraboule, who ought to have obtained both Cross and promotion, got neither. Not long afterwards the visit of the War Minister was announced, and the garrison of Fortlobus had a fortnight in which to prepare for a review. Paraboule's friends then hoped that the sight of his dashing battery would lead the Minister to take notice of him; but just one week before the review the fifty best men of the 1st were drafted into other batteries, and fifty recruits, only just out of gun drill and raw to field manœuvres, were posted under Paraboule's command.

This is an old trick often practised for the behoof of officers whom it is desired to push on, and for the perdition of others whom it is sought to keep back. Paraboule spent six days drilling his men with desperation; but at the review they straggled all over the place, and as the colonel somehow omitted to apprise the Minister that the shaky lot in question were recruits, this illustrious visitor—one of your old pipeclays—made some testy remarks about book-worm officers being precious poor performers in the field; and at the same time he took note of the captain who had inherited the majority of Paraboule's gunners, and had him decorated within the month. These things give a painstaking officer a keen relish for the service, but Paraboule uttered no complaint; and now at the approach of the inspection which forms the text of this paper, Colonel Clapoteau had commenced musing that it would be impossible to withhold justice from Paraboule much longer.

Colonel Clapoteau was not an evil man ; and if he had persecuted Paraboule, it was because his sister had declared that this learned captain had made sport of him, alluding to him as one of those superannuated mummies who ought to be shelved for the good of the service. Now accusations of this sort just blast a man, for a colonel cannot go up to the incriminated subaltern and say, "Is it true, sir, that you called me a mummy?" So Colonel Clapoteau had wreaked his indignation by cold-shouldering Paraboule, and inflicting upon him countless petty slights ; and yet Paraboule was so unchangeably good-tempered and respectful, so active in his duties, so submissive when undeserved reproaches were heaped upon him, that honest Clapoteau had ended by feeling a twinge of remorse.

So on the very eve of the inspection we may behold him entering his sister's boudoir with a list in his hand, and mumbling rather nervously : "Look here, Léontine, I think bygones had better be bygones with respect to Paraboule. The major will get his lieutenant-colonelcy next month, and there's not a man who is fitter to succeed him than Paraboule, who knows all the business work of our brigade by heart.* You see, we can't keep him out of his promotion for ever ; he'd obtain it by seniority before long, and if we continue to spite him people will notice it and talk about it."

Madame de Vivebelle, an impulsive little blonde with sparkling eyes, was filling up some invitations for the dinner to be given to the Inspector-General, and she instantly dropped her pen. "What do you call spite?" she asked ; "it seems to me that an officer who abuses his colonel behind his back is not very deserving of favour."

"Well, he called me a mummy. It's true, but—but—I forgive him," stammered the colonel with a magnanimous effort, for whenever he recollected that he had been called a mummy he felt wroth. "After all," added he, "we've paid him out, you know."

* A French major is an administrative officer. He presides over the Record Office, and has no field duties.

He's young and light-hearted, and may have spoken in a thoughtless moment, and one can't punish a man all his life for a minute's insolence."

"Well, you may forgive him, but I never will," was Madame de Vivebelle's plain answer, as a flush rose to her face, for the praises of Captain Paraboule always seemed to set her nerves jarring. "What I like in an officer is obedience and straightforwardness, and the best man in your brigade is Captain Fleurette, whom you ought to put at the head of your list."

"You say that because Fleurette carries your missal to mass and leads cotillons at your balls," exclaimed the colonel, turning red. "Why, Fleurette is by two years Paraboule's junior!"

"I don't care for that," replied Madame de Vivebelle defiantly; "and if you recommend Captain Paraboule I promise to tell the general what I think of him, and I shall add that you are allowing yourself to be carried away by weak feelings."

Poor Colonel Clapoteau knew that his sister would assuredly be as good as her word; and, what is more, he knew that her word would weigh more with a gallant Inspector-General than any of his own. So he retreated moaning, and in the ante-room met Captain Fleurette, who, neat as a new pin, was freighted with a parcel of novels which he had ordered from Paris for Madame de Vivebelle.

A certain amount of regimental reprobation attaches itself to officers who order novels and carry missals for the feminine belongings of their colonels; but that this reprobation is not always merited we shall see in the case of Fleurette; for about an hour after the dialogue between the colonel and his sister—that is, towards two in the afternoon—Captain Paraboule was at work studying scientific gunnery in his little sitting-room, when there came a rap at the door, and Fleurette entered, looking mysterious and excited, like one with a secret.

He carefully closed the door, took a seat unasked, and laying a hand on Paraboule's knee, stammered, "Look here, old fellow,

I've come to warn you. I don't know what you've done to the colonel's sister, but she's going to bar your Cross and promotion again, and wants to put me at the top of the list. Now I can't take promotion above your head or wear the Cross when you've not got it. So I've come to entreat you to put on your best toggery and go and make your peace with that little vixen. 'There's time enough yet.'

Paraboule had turned a little pale, and during half a minute he said nothing; then he held out his hand and spoke quietly: "You're a good fellow, Fleurette, but I don't mean to continue the struggle any longer. I've been thinking over it to-day, and I intend to resign. You see, when a fellow gets a black mark against him—and goodness knows I've done nothing to deserve mine!—it's sure to floor him some day. In an unguarded moment I might do something, which would be treated as a peccadillo in others, but which would be handled as a crime against me, and then they would cashier me in disgrace. I've seen those things done, and I'd sooner go away while my name is still clear. I've a sort of uncle who will give me a cashiership in his bank—six thousand francs a year and no worries, so it's worth accepting."

Paraboule said this very resolutely, and Fleurette sat aghast, for he had been quite in earnest in speaking of his friend's popularity. A long talk ensued between them, and Fleurette exhausted all his powers of dissuasion, but Paraboule was not shaken, and so at length Fleurette ejaculated in despair:—

"But what the deuce have you done to that woman that she should hate you so?"

"I'm sure I don't know," answered Paraboule, mildly. "We were good friends once, till one evening, when she had dropped a flower from her hair, I stooped and gave it back to her. She snatched it away from me quite rudely, and since that day she has put her ban on me, but I'm sure I can't guess why."

As Paraboule spoke the mouth of Fleurette opened: "You duffer!" he exclaimed, with a laugh, and, as if a light had

abruptly flashed on him, he made a dart to the door, and his scabbard was heard clattering down the stairs into the street.

Madame de Vivebelle was admiring herself in the glass and thinking of airing her newest bonnet in a drive, when Captain Fleurette was announced. He came in looking very grave, and said, "Madame, I am sorry to inform you that Captain Paraboule is going to resign, and our brigade will lose its best and bravest officer."

A sudden pallor then a deep blush overspread Madame de Vivebelle's face, and she sank on a sofa, pretending to toy with her handkerchief: "Captain Paraboule is going to resign"—she faltered, trying ineffectually to master her voice—"do you know why?"

"Yes, I know, but it's a secret; so please don't bear a grudge against me when I've told it you—the more so as your grudges are not pleasant," answered Captain Fleurette, with pleasant sauciness. "The fact is, Paraboule is in love with the prettiest woman in this town—you may guess whom—but she is rich and he is poor, so he feared his attentions might be misconstrued. That is why he is going;" and with these words this honest friend vanished, while Madame de Vivebelle sat gazing after him with quivering lips and a strangely new expression in her eyes.

The next day when the Inspector-General asked Colonel Clapoteau who was the most deserving officer in his brigade, the colonel with a gratified smile named Captain Paraboule, and Madame de Vivebelle, who was standing by, did not contradict him.

CHAPTER XXII.

NOBLES AFLOAT.

IN these Republican times it is by no means surprising that aristocratic folks should evince a decided dislike to accepting office under Government ; and yet it cannot be said that the French nobility keep aloof from the army, democratically constituted as it now may be ; for a glance at the Army List shows one that there is an exceedingly large proportion of officers with handles to their names ; and, indeed, in the cavalry regiments they form a decided majority, as already stated.

It is true, however, that the very old nobility, consisting of the seven ducal families, the eleven marquisial, and the five-and-twenty comtal houses, who can show patents dated before the accession of Louis XIV., are more often to be found serving as private soldiers in time of war than wearing epaulets in time of peace. An example of this is furnished by our distinguished friend M. le Duc Dagobert de Sangbleu ; and it will be remembered that the young Duc de Luynes was killed, rifle in hand, during the Franco-German campaign on the Loire. But neither M. de Luynes nor M. de Sangbleu would have accepted a commission from any sovereign but Henri V., and this for the reason that an officer of the land forces may be obliged to attend the Court of a Louis Philippe or a Napoleon, which would be like compounding with usurpation and the "detestable" principles of 1789.

Officers in the navy, however, are much less exposed to this danger, and the consequence is that the naval service has remained through all changes a resort for the best aristocracy of the "seaside" provinces—Normandy, Brittany, La Vendée, Gascony, and

Provence. On the other hand, the navy is much frequented by the sons of seaport merchants and of colonial planters, and between these and the "noble" officers enmity of course exists. It is an enmity deeper than that between noblemen officers and *roturiers* on shore, for in the rampageous Catholico-Legitimism of a dragoon officer there is often a gloss of affectation which may wear off in time under the constant rubs of social amusements and mess-room intercourse, whereas the religion of a nobleman sailor is sincere, and gathers much in intensity by daily encounters with the perils of the sea.

The officer who has been educated by a priest has no point of moral contact with the one whose training has been scientific, and who regards storms as interesting phenomena worth studying. If the former be of a literary turn, he writes histories, narratives of travel, or romance; * the latter gives himself up to mechanics, and often becomes an inventor. The two do not look at their country in the same way either. The nobleman, as he sails under distant skies, sees France through a poetical haze, conjures up church steeples, old towers, and villages, nestling around some ancient seigneurial pile. He thinks that the panacea for all its ills would be more godliness, and when he hears of a new revolution, which has knocked down some more of the ancient traditions which he venerates, he is shocked as at a piece of vandalism and profanation. The *roturier*, mundanely educated officer, on the contrary, has, by dint of science, generally become a Republican, and welcomes revolutions as tending to the greater diffusion of knowledge, which is his hobby; occasionally he overdoes this materialist indifferentism on purpose to show that he is above the prejudices of his high-born comrade.

The feud between the two castes of naval officers does not, however, find vent in childish duels as in the army; it is restrained

* As witness the late lamented Henri Rivière, who fell so bravely at the outset of the Tonquin expedition, and who, although no nobleman, came of an old stock of the highest *bourgeois* rank, and had been originally educated by the Jesuits. Rivière was known among his friends as a most devout Catholic.

by a strenuous discipline. As the common seamen of Brittany and La Vendée are often at daggers drawn with those of Gascony and Provence—a light-hearted and, except when thunder is growling, an incredulous race—it is necessary that the officers should live on good terms to set an example to the men ; and it is the easier to make them do so, as naval officers, noble and otherwise, are undoubtedly the best specimens of French gentlemen—well-bred, honourable, obedient, and manly. So, instead of bickering at one another, the two sets evince their antagonism by exaggerated politeness, and by a studied avoidance of all topics where they would be likely to clash. A stranger invited to a mess on board ship notices that the conversation is chequered by intermittent pauses showing that dangerous ground has been reached.

This said, it naturally follows that there are exceptional cases where friendships of a very brotherly character are struck up between officers of opposite castes ; and as these friendships are most likely to be contracted during cadetship on board the *Borda* (French *Britannia*), the departure of a youngster for this fine training-ship is attended with much anxiety on the part of the blue-blooded parents. That is why, when young Raoul de la Roche-Varech was about to set off for Brest after passing his examination, you might have seen something like an air of apprehension reign in the Château de Varech, in Cornouailles, where that young gentleman had been brought up.

Cornouailles is the most rugged district in Brittany, and the owners of the Château de Varech are a rugged class, who have never been famous for mixing affably with their fellow-men. They do not belong to the peerage and *ordon-bleu* nobility, but the head of the house is a Baron whose eldest son takes the title of Chevalier ; and, like some of those old families in Wales and Scotland, who can boast centuries of unquestioned lairdship, the house of Roche-Varech can afford to look down upon ninety-nine per cent. among the 150,000 Frenchmen who claim descent from the Crusaders.

Life in these old families is a rather dreary business. Among the richer French aristocracy the practice of having a confessor to live in the house has long been discarded. When madame wants to confess, her confessor comes to her from the cathedral city or from some parish far away, and the priest who resides in the household acts merely as a tutor to the children and as an ornamental appendage at dinner parties. But in châteaux like that of Varech the practice of maintaining the confessor as one of the family has never been discarded, and the result is that, the consciences of father and mother, children and servants being in the keeping of a holy man continually prowling about the premises, constraint and Puritanism of a very wearisome kind prevail.

Now Father Kerdru, the confessor and tutor at Varech, is a morose ecclesiastic—himself noble, regarding a *mésalliance* as the first crime in the calendar, and the eating of meat on fast days as second to it in point of heinousness. He is not the sort of man to joke with on a matter of creed or observance, nor one to infuse any man-of-the-world spirit into his judgment on the ordinary blunders of life. He proved a harsh tutor, but one who understood his duties to the full, sharing in all the sports of his pupils, teaching them to leap, fence, ride, and shoot, and yet schooling them in Latin, mathematics, history, and English, with a thoroughness not attained in any college. It was he and he alone who prepared young Raoul for his naval examination; and as the day for his pupil's departure for the *Borda* approached he was observed to be more gloomy and silent than any one else in the château.

Raoul himself was naturally in high feather, for his mother and sisters were making much of him. His trunk was being packed with new linen and presents; he had been solemnly endowed with a gold turnip watch, a telescope, and a silver image of Notre Dame d'Auray worn by his grandfather, who had served under the Bailli de Suffren; and on his last day at home he was allowed to wear his new uniform—viz., a blue jacket with a straight collar and four rows of gilt buttons, blue trousers with a broad light-blue

stripe, and a soft cap with a gold anchor badge enscrolled in laurel leaves. This tasteful dress well set off the sunburnt face and the hardy limbs of this noble youngster—a very different boy to the sickly and skinny youths to be found in Parisian Lycées. His hair was close-cropped, his eyes large and clear, his face grave yet bright and energetic, and his hands were covered with blisters thick as horn, and testifying to his pleasure in rough sports—notably the climbing of rocks and high trees, for no apparent purpose but to risk breaking his neck enjoyably.

Well, on the eve of his going away, when family prayers had been said by Father Kerdru in a loud rasping voice, much like commination, Raoul was going to leave the room with the others for bed, when his tutor addressed him authoritatively in the hearing of the household, and said, “Raoul, stay ; I wish to speak to you.”

The Baron, his wife, children, and servants walked out wishing the priest good night, and the latter paced broodingly to and fro for a few minutes before he again spoke : “You have nothing to add to the confession which you made me this morning, Raoul ?”

“No, father.”

“Well, as you are going to pass out of my hands, I may tell you that you have been a good boy, but you have a soft heart and a tendency to jest, which you must beware of as pitfalls. Where you are going you will hear our faith assailed, and as scoffers find it easier to throw ridicule upon observances than to disprove dogmas, you will be laughed at for fasting on Fridays ; but remember that it is by the strict enforcement of observances that faith is kept lively among the ignorant, so that you fast as much for example as for discipline. Some bolder tongues, again, instigated by the devil, will try to draw you into controversy on your faith, and it may well be that if you let yourself be enticed by them they will adduce sophistries which will cause you to doubt. But what would that mean ? Why simply that you were subordinating eternal truths to the comprehension of your own childish intellect. Do you hear me ?”

"Yes, father."

"Well, swear to me that you will on no account be entrapped into arguing upon your religion. Argument implies the possibility of being in the wrong—you don't argue about the existence of daylight—and such a confession in your case would be impiety tantamount to admitting that your father and mother, who believe, are both fools. Now swear."

"I swear, father."

"I rely on you; and now let me add that by an absurd law of modern times your father is bound to give you a share of his property; but if you and your younger brother, who will go into the Church, are honourable men you will renounce your inheritance, in order that it may be divided between your elder brother and your sisters. I, who speak to you, renounced my inheritance. You bear an ancient, spotless name, and should learn to regard it as your only wealth; and yet, recollect, it is preposterous to glory in one's ancestors if one is not prepared to practise all the virtues which made their name great. You must be self-denying, push honour far beyond conventional limits, owe nothing to any man, and wear religion, not as a parade vestment, but as a serviceable garment of every day and hour. If you do this you will be a true noble; and now good night. I will go with you to Brest to-morrow."

The lad shook his tutor's rough hand, and went up to bed, feeling not unlovingly towards this stern priest, who had always practised what he preached, and so he passed his last night at home dreaming himself to be the champion of a persecuted Church, and the depositary of all the vital traditions of the De la Roche-Varechs.

The next day he and Father Kerdru started for Brest together, and reached that most rainy and fortified city in the afternoon. A drizzle was falling as usual, and down through the narrow streets they walked side by side, the boy strutting proudly in his uniform, the priest holding his black-gloved hands behind his back, and taking long strides. Behind them trudged Hoël, an

old servant of the Château de Varech, carrying his young master's trunk on his shoulder—a stout churl, speaking Gaelic and little French, with lank yellow hair streaming below his shoulders, and dressed in the Breton costume, wide baggy breeches, holland cloth jacket, and scarlet belt embroidered with beads.

So they reached the port, and hailed a gig, manned by a couple of sailors with red tufts on their flat caps, to row them out to the *Borda* anchored in the roads. Twenty minutes' pulling by the lolloping, dash-lacking stroke of those French sailors, who cannot be cured of flattening the palms of their outer hand on the top of their oar instead of grasping it like Christians, and the gig glides alongside the *Borda*. A marine with yellow epaulets, dark blue tunic, and grey-blue pantaloons is mounting guard at the ladder-steps, and a young gentleman four feet high is keeping watch over nothing in particular with a telescope half as big as himself and a dirk at his side.

To impress everybody with a sense of his dignity this sucking Jean Bart calls in shrill tones to Raoul for his name, and the said name having been given the new cadet is passed over to a sub-lieutenant pacing about the quarter-deck, with his frock-coat buttoned and white gloves on his hands. He is evidently not a nobleman officer, for he lifts his cap coldly to the priest and summons a marine to show the cadet his berth, then turns away as if nothing had happened, to survey with interest a British ironclad weighing anchor half a mile off.

Two o'clock dinner is over ; it is recreation time till three, and, descending to the first deck, used as class-room, Raoul and his tutor find most of the cadets clustered round the port-holes and staring at the British man-of-war which was attracting the lieutenant's attention. There is an undying rivalry between French and English sailors—the only class who remember the feud bred of seven hundred years' war ; but even in the crowing talk of these cadets one can discern how profound is the difference of thought between the two castes of naval officers.

While noble youngsters chirrup about Duquesne and Duguay

Tronin, those of bourgeois birth and more scientific turn descant with envy upon the superior strength of the English fleet. And if Raoul and the Abbé Kerdru could overhear the lieutenants in the gun-room, they might be struck by the still wider divergence of views ; for, while the aristocrats talk with some bombast of having a bout some day to avenge La Hogue (the French do not count Trafalgar as a defeat ; they lay the blame of it on the Spaniards), the *roturiers* bemoan the present decline of the French navy, and feel that a bout with England might lead to unpleasantness.

But Raoul and the priest do not pay heed to anything they hear ; they follow the marine down to the second deck, which does duty as dormitory and dining-room, and where some blue-jackets are removing the remnants of a boiled-beef and bean feast from endless rows of deal tables swinging from the rafters by iron rods. Down the length of these tables they go, the priest being obliged to stoop so as not to knock his head, and in the farthest dark corner the marine points complacently to a hammock lashed to the beams and says, "There !"

The Abbé Kerdru's task is over now ; he has brought his young charge to his destination, and has nothing to do but to say good-bye. Glorifying, however, in public manifestations of his faith, he says, "Kneel down, Raoul, and I will give you absolution with my blessing." And much to the abashment of the marine, the boy drops on his knees and bends his head, after which the priest hurriedly grips his small fingers and stalks away.

Now, half-a-dozen other cadets happened to have followed Raoul down to the second deck ; and some have removed their caps during the absolution, but one named Droleau, who has remained covered, leisarely saunters forward with a cigarette in his mouth (prohibited—but the sergeant of marines is not in sight), and exclaims, "I say, my devout friend, what's your name ?"

"Raoul de la Roche-Varech."

"I guessed as much, but are you going to favour us with those exhibitions every day?"

"What exhibitions?" asks Raoul, indignantly.

"Why, that knee-drill," answers Droleau, who is too young a hand to have attained the courteous tolerance which he will master in manhood, and saying this he grins.

French boys do not fight with fists; they clutch each other by the hair: but cadets are debarred from doing this by reason of having no hair to speak of, but only bristles. After another moment's banter, however, Raoul and Droleau have collided somehow, and Father Kerdru, who has forgotten some parting admonition and returned to give it, has the emotion of seeing his absolved pupil kneeling on the breast of another boy, clutching him by the nose, and smiting him heavily on the face with his displayed hand.

"Why, what's the meaning of this, sir?" sings out the priest, catching up his late charge by the waistband like a puppy, whereat Raoul, with blood on his cheeks and tears in his eyes, bawls this ever-memorable answer, "Father, I'm fighting for my faith!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE LEGION OF HONOUR.

It has been already recorded that those distinguished young noblemen the Duc de Sangbleu and the Marquis Raoul de Muguet both won their Crosses of the Legion of Honour during the war with Germany; and on the other hand we have seen how Captain Buche failed to obtain the prized decoration, and how on his side Captain Parahpule, victim of a woman's resentment, almost missed receiving the reward which his talents and services entitled him to. A naval or military man, be he either of noble or *roturier* birth, may, well nigh at all times, accept nomination or promotion in the Legion of Honour, for, in connection with the services, the familiar ribbons, rosettes, crosses, collars and stars are considered to be the reward of valour or patriotism—things which politics have nothing whatever to do with. But it would scarcely be correct for a civilian member of the *grand monde* to have himself gazetted, now-a-days, as a knight, an officer, a commander, a grand officer, or a grand cross; for in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred this would imply political services, and High Life folk, as we know, look down upon the Republic in its Opportunist phase, and are neither disposed to assist it nor prone to accept its favours.

But if the decoration, worn by your civilian grandee, dates from Louis Philippe or from Napoleon III., or for the matter of that from Marshal MacMahon's presidency, it will command all due deference in aristocratic circles; and this, although in lieu of being the "star of the brave" it might often more fittingly be called the "stigma of intrigue."

Old Royalists—men whose hopes lie buried at Geritz—have, no doubt, but little respect for the Legion of Honour. They trusted perhaps that they would some day witness the revival of the stately Orders of the Holy Ghost, of St. Michael, and of St. Louis, which flourished in the days of the legitimate monarchy; but it would seem as if the Duc de Nemours, whose patent dates from Charles X., were destined to be the last of the noble “chevaliers des Ordres du Roi.” A few old knights of St. Louis (an exclusively military decoration) may perhaps still hobble about the Faubourg St. Germain or nurse their crippled limbs within the precincts of the Invalides, but M. de Nemours, alone, of all people in the world, has the right to array himself with the famous azure ribbon of the Holy Ghost and its eight-pointed white enamel cross bearing the golden dove, or to sport the black ribbon of St. Michael and the accompanying collar of golden cockle-shells.

The fact that the Legion of Honour is now-a-days the only recognized Order in France must in some measure temper the prejudices of mourning Legitimists; and members of the Imperial and Orleanist aristocracies have, it might seem, no reason at all to regard the Order, even now-a-days, with any other sentiment but one of deference. And yet if President Grévy offered the familiar red ribbon to some civilian aristocrat, the latter, as we foreshadowed above, would probably take a leaf out of the late M. Courbet's book, and, like the Communalist painter under the Empire, peremptorily refuse the flattering distinction. Courbet, be it remembered, refused the Cross after he had been actually gazetted; and hence the practice of sounding persons beforehand as to their willingness to be enrolled in the Order which Goethe called “the only rational one ever founded.”

But if those extremes—Courbet the Communalist and the Royalist grandee, might in some sense meet—the former refusing the Cross from a hated despot, and the latter declining to receive it from the hands of the Republic—matters are undoubtedly very different with the bulk of Frenchmen, who habi-

tually hunger for the ribbon, no matter whether its bestowal be vested in King, Emperor, or President. Foreigners, moreover, are at times extremely partial to the slip of scarlet silk which shows so well in a button-hole, notably those of the Latin and Greek races as well as Russians and Arabs. On the score of their Republican opinions, Yankees used to refuse "to be made French knights of," but nowadays—*sub Julio*—they have outgrown this prejudice very considerably. As for Englishmen, the red ribbon is of so little use to them unless they reside in France that there can be no great eagerness among them to obtain it; except indeed they be exhibitors at some Parisian World's Show, when the cross of merit serves them as an advertisement!

But how is the hungering Frenchman to obtain the coveted ribbon? Shall he follow Nestor Roqueplan's apposite advice and "beg for it until he gets it?" M. Tarot, the financier, fears that he might beg and beg, but that begging would prove of no avail in his case unless his application was backed up by some one of real influence in high quarters. And yet why should not M. Tarot become a Knight of the Legion of Honour, since nearly a hundred thousand of his countrymen* enjoy that distinction?

This is precisely the question which M. Tarot is asking of his old schoolfellow, General Doubledé, and the general can only answer: "My dear Tarot, you are such an unmitigated scamp that there isn't a Minister dare propose you."

* Founded by First Consul Bonaparte in 1802 to recompense civil and military merit, the Legion of Honour counted 6,000 members at the fall of the First Empire; 5,000 of them being officers and soldiers who had won the Cross by gallantry in action. The Bourbons revived the old monarchical orders in 1814, but they also maintained the Legion of Honour, the ranks of which had swollen to 28,000 in 1824. Louis Philippe re-abelished the Bourbon orders, and was most lavish in distributing the red ribbon, 52,000 people being entitled to wear it at the epoch of the Revolution of 1848. Under the Second Empire, the Legion increased to over 100,000 members, knavish adventurers, venal journalists, and time-serving judges being enrolled wholesale in its ranks. Nowadays there are still about 100,000 members, the great majority of whom are chevaliers or knights. In virtue of recent laws, only two appointments are made for every three vacancies that occur.

However, there are numerous ways of calling a man a scamp, just as there are a hundred and fifty meanings to be expressed in a kick, so M. Tarot laughs. "Let us go into the question methodically, old boy. To begin with—you're a Commander of the Legion?"

"Yes, but I hope you are not going to compare—"

"No; you got the silver-mounted cross of Chevalier for sabring down nursemaids at the *coup d'état*, your lootings in China earned you the Officer's rosette and gold-mounted cross, you went halves with Blagueferme in a contract for tin rifles to the Loire armies, and Gambetta, admiring your zeal, gave you your Commander's collar and cross pendant. Since then you've been playing fast and loose with the Republic, keeping your eyes on the weather-cock, and you'll soon be Grand Officer, with a star on your left breast."

"Softly there; who told you I went halves with Blagueferme?" exclaims General Doubledé.

"I was B.'s partner, and filled up the cheques in your favour, so I don't blame you," rejoins M. Tarot, with his tongue in his cheek. "But you see Blagueferme himself has been knighted!"

"He has got himself elected deputy, and votes for the Government," grins the general.

"Well, what do you say then to M. de Girouette, who has sworn fidelity to a dozen Governments, betrayed them all, and contrived to be always Ambassador or Minister? and what do you say to President Graissepatte, who has sold justice by the pound, and to Plumedoie, that miserable journalist, who kicked off his convictions like a pair of slippers when they offered him a prefectship?"

"Have the wits to become a Minister like Girouette, or a Chief Justice like Graissepatte, and they'll decorate you too," laughs the general. "As to journalists, they're a wild herd, and when Government catches one of them it sets the Cross on him as you do a collar on a dog, to mark ownership."

"Well, but tell me why M. de Complaisot should have the

Cross ? There's a debased rogue for you, who winks at his wife's goings on, and owes everything to her."

"Precisely so ; he owes her the Cross ; but look here, Tarot, it's no use arguing," breaks off the general amicably. "You may tell me of a thousand rascals in the Legion, and I'll answer that a badger does less harm than a fox, and yet everybody treats the badger worse. You have had the ill luck to become disreputable, and now you want the red ribbon to cleanse you. The very fact that you attach so much importance to it will prevent the Government from ever giving it you : but you may try the clergy ; they do a great deal for repenting sinners who can pay."

"You are poking fun at me. What use can the clergy be to me, with such a Government of atheists as we now enjoy ? Why the clergy have no influence at all."

"You are mistaken, Tarot," responds the general. "No doubt we have expelled the Jesuits, and got rid of a number of friars of every hue ; but Madame Grévy still confesses her sins to a Dominican monk, and Madame Wilson and Madame Ferry are both very devout ladies. Besides, the Government is half afraid of stirring up any more religious strife, and conciliation seems to be the password at the present moment ; so the clergy have more influence than you suppose. Believe me, try Madame Grévy's confessor, if you know him ; or better still, get into the Nuncio's good books."

"Well, I'll try the clergy, as you think it best. Thanks, and now shake hands, my friend," says M. Tarot.

"With pleasure," answers the general, "as there is nobody looking on."

M. Tarot was disgusted but not discouraged by the results of this interview. He wanted the red ribbon for his button-hole because this decoration sets the seal to a Frenchman's respectability. It may be said that he could have done like so many others, and bought a foreign decoration with a red ribbon ; but he was too well known for this device, besides which he wanted to be gazetted as a Knight of the Legion of Honour, and to flout

his insignia unequivocally. When everything has been said against it the Legion of Honour is still the most respected of Continental orders, for the many brave and distinguished men in it—including artists, authors, *savants*, and inventors—are more than a counterpoise for the mob of queer characters whom Louis Philippe and afterwards Napoleon III. introduced for political reasons. Moreover, the statutes have, with very rare exceptions, been so far adhered to that members have always been legally honest men ; that is, have never been sentenced by the courts for dishonourable offences, nor caught cheating at cards ; so that policemen, Government employés, and others, who are bidden show marked respect to the bit of scarlet silk, can do so without much fear of committing themselves.*

Now, M. Tarot was legally an honest man, but there hung about him an odour of roguery which often argues in the man afflicted by it a certain frankness in rascality. Financiers of evil repute, like ladies under a cloud, generally owe their misfortunes to not having the bump of dissimulation sufficiently developed. As General Doubledé said, however, society weighs harder on these badgers than on the foxes ; and the Legion of Honour in particular has frequently atoned for the admission of a number of characters, black all over, by ruthlessly excluding a few who were simply speckled. So Robert Tarot, measuring with his mind's eye the height which separated him from the cross of honour, much as a man in a fair gazes at the silver goblet hung on the top of a maypole, conned over what priests would be likely to give him a back up. His acquaintance among holy men was not extensive ; indeed, since the day of his confirmation he had never had occasion to remember whether he was a Catholic or a Jew, and he was scarcely minded to go and confess his sins to

* Respecting the honourability of the members of the Legion of Honour, it is curious to note that when First Consul Bonaparte instituted the Order, he at first intended that it should have a white ribbon,—the “ emblem of purity.” White however being the colour of the Bourbons, red was eventually chosen, although it had previously been worn by the Knights of St. Louis.

the same Dominican that Madame Grévy employs. He was sorely puzzled what he should do, when luckily a friend came to his aid in the person of Madame Doubledé, wife of the general.

Talleyrand once said, "*Un père de famille est capable de tout ;*" he might have said more truly "*une mère de famille,*" and such no doubt would have been his remark had he known Madame Doubledé. This lady loved money, and she had a keen womanly sense of justice. If a writer of infidel books, like M. About, gets the Cross, why, thought she, should not a promoter of Christian works be decorated? and she resolved that M. Tarot should be made to promote a Christian work without delay.

It was not difficult to find a work. Madame Doubledé had long been galled at seeing what lustre some of her aristocratic friends, such as Mesdames de Rosethé, de Réséda, and de Mignonnette, had derived from founding and endowing such charities as the Dispensary for the Bald, the Hospital for Gout and Indigestion, &c.; and she herself had long desired to become chief patroness of a Hospital for Squinters, whereof her confessor, l'Abbé Monocle, a jealous rival of l'Abbé de St. Toupet, should be chaplain. So she sent for M. Tarot, and began by politely deploring the injustice often shown to men who endeavour to stimulate national industry by Bourse enterprises.

"All this means that the old harriidan is going to bleed me," reflected M. Tarot, who was no fool, and aloud he added, "How much shall I have to pay, madame?"

"Are you ready to place yourself entirely in my hands?" asked Madame Doubledé, simpering.

"Myself, yes; but not my purse. I should like you to name a sum down," answered M. Tarot cautiously, and Madame Doubledé reflected a moment: "It will require a hundred and twenty-five thousand francs."

"A hundred and—never!" yelled M. Tarot. "Why, out of all my enterprises I have only been able to clear a hundred thousand francs a year."

"Well, you can easily part with fifteen months' income for a

lifetime of dignity ; and surely you wouldn't haggle with the poor ? " remonstrated Madame Doubledé.

" With the poor—with the poor," mumbled M. Tarot ; " why the old girl thinks I can't see through her. The odd twenty-five thousand francs will go into her pockets. However, in for a penny "—then aloud, " I won't haggle, madame, but you guarantee me success ? "

" Complete success," replied Madame Doubledé, her eyes gleaming. " We will institute a Hospital for Squinters ; it shall be under the invocation of a saint and under the control of the clergy. We will try and get the Duchesse de Campo-Formio to inaugurate it and Cardinal Finemouche to bless it. Then I will introduce you to the Cardinal, and the rest will be easy. By the way, I may draw on you unlimitedly ? "

" The deuce, no !—I beg pardon—you may draw for the sum named."

" I will do so to-morrow, then," said Madame Doubledé.

" What a grasping old hag ! " mused M. Tarot.

" What a curmudgeon ! " reflected the lady ; and they parted without mutual admiration, for M. Tarot had shown his ignorance of society by letting go his money as if it were a tooth being drawn. When a man resigns himself to a sacrifice, it costs nothing more to make it gracefully, and he is sure then of reaping at least some interest on his money.

A few weeks after this the list of lady patronesses to the Squinting Hospital began to appear in the newspapers along with a programme for the grand inauguration concert and the name of the bankers by whom contributions would be thankfully received. All the stratagems of fashionable charity-promoting were set at work. Madame Estella, the great prima donna, was asked to sing gratuitously, as if singing was an amusement to her instead of a profession, and the *Cigare* newspaper, not one of whose writers had ever penned an article for nothing, shot barbed phrases at M. Roucoulot because that tenor had excused himself on the ground of an indisposition, after having sung twelve

times gratis already that year. Meantime, ladies touted for subscriptions among all the mankind on their visiting lists, the older and richer being tapped of bank notes and the younger of napoleons, while a few hundred children in piously-managed schools were bereft of their halfpence, being earnestly warned how they themselves might come to squint some day.

Amid all this righteous bustling the house hired for the Hospital was being appropriately painted and furnished. The statue of a saint was set over the door, a room was being fitted up as an oratory for Father Monocle, the chaplain, and a black marble tablet riveted in a conspicuous position recorded in letters of gold the names of Madame Doubledé and her intimate friends and co-patronesses. But no mention was made of M. Tarot. The poor wretch was told from the first that everything would be lost if his name appeared in the matter—that the money must all seem to come out of Madame Doubledé's purse, and that he himself must not even attend the religious ceremony of opening, though he might go to the concert by paying like the rest at the door. So M. Tarot watched the arrival of the great lady who opened his Hospital, and of the Cardinal who blessed it, from afar—that is, among the mob outside; after this he roamed by Madame Doubledé's house and listened to the champagne corks popping at the breakfast given to his Eminence, and in the evening he had the satisfaction of being turned away from the concert-room because all the places were taken.

Next day another piece of satisfaction was reserved for him in a bill showing that the expenses of furnishing the Hospital had exceeded by twenty-five thousand francs the sum estimated, and it was significantly hinted to him that a great deal would depend on his manfully paying that deficit. He did pay it, and then at last obtained a glimpse of his well-earned reward.

"I have spoken to the Cardinal, and he wishes to see you at noon to-morrow," said Madame Doubledé. "His Eminence is most grateful for what you have done, and I am sure you will come away satisfied from your audience."

You may be sure twelve o'clock had not done striking when M. Tarot, in the full glory of dress clothes and red hot from emotion, was ushered into the Cardinal's presence. His Eminence was in scarlet, with a gold cross hanging from his neck, lace flounces to his cassock, and a ruby ring on his finger, and looked unutterably august and paternal.

M. Tarot bent double before him like a compass, and the Cardinal, extending a thin hand, said gently, "Charity such as yours, sir, which does good by stealth, is surely the most generous of all ; and I feel the sincerest pleasure in being deputed to offer you a recompense which I trust will gladden the whole of your life hereafter," murmuring which words his Eminence took from the table and pressed into M. Tarot's trembling fingers a folded piece of vellum.

The room, the Cardinal, the staircase, the acolyte in the front hall to whom he flung a napoleon, everything seemed to whirl in a gallop before M. Tarot's eyes as he bounded out of the archiepiscopal palace, and sought the shelter of the nearest doorway to read his vellum. It was surely the patent of Knight of the Legion of Honour ; he tore it open, and suddenly parted his lips to exclaim— But no matter what he said ; suffice that his vellum had nothing at all in common with the coveted decoration, being simply engrossed with the 'Pope's blessing and a Plenary Indulgence !

CHAPTER XXIV.

M. GRUCHE, ECONOMIST.

ECONOMIST ! he had written the word after his name in signing all his contributions to reviews—he had been elected on the strength of it to be a member of the Institute (Section of Moral and Political Science) and a deputy ; and when he was appointed Minister of Colleges and Museums everybody knew that an earnest disciple of Monsieur Gobden had at last found his way into the Cabinet.

It cannot be said that the other Ministers were over-pleased at the appointment, for M. Gruche came among them like the very good boy in a school-room. He was a learned, austere, unassailable old man. Those little abuses which are inherent to every system of government, and the good-natured tolerance for which constitutes what is called “experience of affairs,” were likely to find in him an impatient foe, and it was to be feared that he would try his hand at administrative reforms which would win the approval of shallow critics among the public and oblige his colleagues to follow suit. However, there he was, and it was necessary to bear with him. In sum he was less dangerous in office than as an independent member, poking statistics at the Budget from the centre benches or the columns of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*.

As for M. Gruche himself, his appointment crowned the darling hope of his life, for now he would be able to carry out theories which he had profoundly studied. M. Gruche was not more conceited than the average number of us, but in his inner mind he could not help thinking that a man like himself had long been wanted

in the Cabinet ; and the congratulations which he received from some Economist Club in London, to which he belonged, confirmed him in this impartial conviction.

On the day after he had been gazetted he had already mastered the estimates of his department ; on the second day he appointed his eldest son to be Secretary-General, not from reasons of nepotism, but because a statesman bent on reform naturally likes to be seconded by officials who agree with him ; on the third day he sent for the *Chef du Personnel* (Permanent Under-Secretary) and pointed out that one hundred and eighty clerks seemed to be much in excess of what was required, and that he proposed to dismiss fifty.

Now M. Crampon, the Permanent Secretary in question, was one of those gentlemen whom no revolutions dislodge. He had grizzled under about thirty different Ministers, and had too much tact to baulk the first aspirations of a statesman new and ardent in his work. But he took leave to explain that the roll of clerks was strictly proportionate to the needs of the service ; that there were occasional presses of work necessitating much more than one hundred and eighty clerks, and that, moreover, as thirty-five on the list were unpaid supernumeraries, the dismissal of fifty would only save the salaries of fifteen ; we are not sure that he did not add something about the vested interests of the thirty-five supers who had been engaged on the understanding that they should be promoted to paid clerkships as vacancies occurred.

M. Gruche, however, knew what routine was from having often written about it. Here was a clear attempt to impede him at starting. By a stroke of the pen he overruled M. Crampon and by another he ordered the reorganization of his department. Previously the hundred and eighty clerks had been divided into nine sections of twenty ; henceforth there should be ten sections of thirteen, and, as a chief clerk was required for the newly created section, M. Gruche appointed his second son, not for reasons of nepotism, but because—see above.

The Minister's next step was to overhaul the estimates for

grants of books, pictures, and antiquities to different libraries and museums, and to decide that most of these grants could be diminished by half; at the same time, discovering that there was a wasteful project afoot for endowing a Gascon city with a museum of fossils, M. Gruche appealed to his Public Works colleague as to whether this museum, the cost of which was to be borne jointly by the two departments, could not be adjourned for a few years. Of course it could, said the P. W. colleague, well pleased; for it happened that this museum had only been forced upon him by M. Gruche's predecessor, and the adjournment of it would allow him—the P. W. colleague—to undertake a new bridge which his constituents importunately begged for.

M. Gruche rubbed his hands as he surveyed the total of his projected savings; indeed, this total was so large that the Minister felt justified in ordering five thousand copies of his works—reprinted essays, &c.—to be circulated at the State expense through all the public libraries, and this he did not with any mercenary delight at pocketing the profits of the transaction, but because a statesman who is intent on stringent economy cannot do better than disseminate his views widely throughout the land.

About this date M. Gruche grappled successfully with another item of extravagance. Public servants are aware that it is the custom of clerks to write their private letters in office hours and to frank them with the Government stamp; in fact, the custom is pushed to such lengths in France that clerks have been known to frank not only their own letters but those of their friends, and even the trade circulars of commercial relatives, so that the Post Office complains of losing about forty thousand pounds a year by the practice. Coming into an office-room one day M. Gruche detected a clerk serenely franking five dozen packets of samples directed to customers by an uncle in the tailoring way, and hereat his wrath was kindled.

“Draw up a minute to the effect that private franking shall be punished by ignominious dismissal,” he cried sternly to his eldest

son, as he stalked back into his study ; and, saying this, his eye fell upon about two thousand letters, neatly piled up on a side table. "What are these, sir ?"

"Those are the invitations to my mother's ball ; she has sent them here to be franked," answered the eldest son, putting his signature to the minute ; and M. Gruche muttered, "That's different." And undoubtedly it was different ; for when a Minister invites two thousand people to dance for the public weal, no one would contend that he should pay for the trouble of summoning them out of his own moneys.

Meanwhile, though, M. Gruche's savings were brewing difficulties for him. One morning his colleague for the Colonies rushed in to say that the diminution of the grant to the public library in the Department which he represented had moved the electors to fury and jeopardized his seat ; and simultaneously the Gascon city, which had been defrauded of its museum of fossils, made hasty but unmistakable preparations for returning an Anarchist deputy to the Chamber. At a Cabinet Council it was resolved that the return of this Anarchist must be prevented at any price, and that, as the Gascon city had been solemnly promised its museum, that edifice must be given it.

Unfortunately, the site of the projected museum having been sold, it now became necessary to buy it back at a premium, and as the Minister of Public Works had promised his own constituents the new bridge that was to have been built out of the museum grant, the Budget stood saddled with bridge and museum together—a state of affairs which caused the Finance Minister to pull a wry face.

But this was not all, for it was out of the question that the Colonial Minister should lose his seat for a beggarly grant, or that other Ministers should lose theirs ; so that M. Gruche was bidden to restore all the grants as devised by his predecessor, and content himself with moving diminutions in the following year's estimates, which he would himself prepare.

M. Gruche moaned, but his economical spirit was put to a yet

sorer test when on returning from the Council, he found a deputation of his own constituents waiting to memorialize him for public works, and subsidies to the extent of two million francs or so. Now M. Gruche loathed corruption; but when a Minister knows himself to be indispensable to the national welfare, it is not corruption if he tries to save himself from political extinction by all the means in his power. If M. Gruche had snubbed his memorialists, they would certainly have ousted him at the next election, besides branding him with ingratitude towards the province where he had been bred and born, and which had made a deputy of him. It was not M. Gruche's fault if democratic institutions compel a Minister to be extremely wary of offending his electors by undue parsimony; so M. Gruche pledged himself to the amount of one million, and having sent away his memorialists half-satisfied, sat down to consider that his attempts at economy had hitherto only resulted in increased expenditure.

It is in such moments of disappointment that great inspirations occur to a man of mind. Every museum is peopled with an army of keepers preposterously in excess of the number needed. M. Gruche remembered that he had never entered a museum without seeing troops of these lazy good-for-nothings loafing about and gaping away their time at the rate of £60 a year, and he determined that such prodigality should no more obtain his sanction. A month later two hundred museum-keepers were sent about their business, and ten days after that a museum, whose staff of watchers had become inadequate, was burned down, while another was robbed of some valuable treasures. M. Gruche was yelled at from one end of France to the other; the two hundred keepers were reinstated (retaining the indemnities which they had received on discharge); and, as all this brought a pressure of correspondence on the office, M. Crampon declared that more clerks must be called in.

"Let us take back the five-and-thirty unpaid supers, then," proposed M. Gruche.

"Pardon me, your Excellency; the supers would not come

back without payment," demurred M. Crampon. "We can only get unpaid clerks by promising them promotion; and as we broke faith with the last batch we employed, payment will be a *sine quâ non* for the future."

The upshot of it was that fifty paid clerks returned in lieu of the former lot, and a new reorganization of the department was necessary. M. Crampon was for re-establishing things on their old footing, but M. Gruche preferred to create three new sections involving three new chief clerkships at 10,000 francs a year, which he presented respectively to his wife's brother, his own nephew, and the son of his sister-in-law—not for reasons of nepotism, but because, under his distressed circumstances, it was more than ever needful that he should have allies imbued with the principles of economy.

It was at this juncture that M. Gruche's wife came before him with claims on the public purse. In addition to his salary a French Minister has the benefit of a mansion rent free, with use of furniture, plate, linen, firing, &c. Madame Gruche found that the furniture of her state apartments was faded, and that the linen was growing old, and the conference with the custodian of the *garde-meuble*, who sees to these matters, led to her begging M. Gruche to carry a bill of 49,000 francs on to his estimates. M. Gruche had long been cured of rebelling against Madame Gruche; but he was the less concerned to do so in this instance, as his wife's bill was accompanied by an alarming statement which dwarfed it to insignificance.

Madame Gruche had been gambling on 'Change, and, what is more, had lost wofully. Availing herself of special information imparted to her by her husband, she had deputed a stockbroker to buy and sell. Unhappily, M. Gruche, being more occupied with retrenchments in his own department than with abstruse political movements, had neglected to warn his wife of perturbing incidents in time, so that Madame Gruche, who had gone into the market as a "bull," was grievously put out on settling-day.

"But it's all your own fault," exclaimed she tartly; "and I

hope for the future you will be more accurate in your news, else your children and I will be beggared."

"Oh, woman, you have disgraced me! If this became known, my character would be gone for ever!" groaned honest M. Gruche, in consternation.

"Character gone—stuff and nonsense!" retorted the lady impatiently, "everybody does it. How do you think A—and B—— made their fortunes if not by wisely profiting by the trumps that were in their hands? I had not been in this house a week before Madame de Pouffe told me of the stockbroker who managed things for the last Minister; but I knew it would be useless to ask you to deal with him, so I did it all myself. What you have got to do now is to stay in office long enough for me to retrieve my losses and to lay by a fortune for our family!"

M. Gruche vanished wringing his hands, but he stayed in office. As to his economies, his colleague, the Finance Minister, one morning wrote him the following friendly note:—"My dear Gruche,—I do not want to be hard on a colleague, but, to tell you the truth, the various experiments you have tried in your department have laid on my Budget an expense of some 3,000,000 francs more than I was prepared for. The items can be passed by distributing them in *virements* among the estimates of other departments; but try and be more careful next twelve-month; for I have a horrible dread of that school of economical critics of which I believe you are still the head master. *Sans rancune.*"

A few months before, such a letter would have slain M. Gruche, but he bore up under it with surprising equanimity. "The fact is," explained he to one of his economical disciples on the press, to whom he had thrown a sop in the shape of a post of emolument to prevent him barking—"the fact is, I have discovered that economy in one department only leads to wastefulness in another. If I save a million, it is not the public which profits, but the War or Navy Office, which coolly annexes my million; so

that it will be virtually useless to attempt retrenchment until I can oblige all my colleagues to co-operate with me.”

“And is there any chance of this?” inquired the disciple respectfully.

“Yes ; but I must remain in office at least ten years more,” answered M. Gruche.

CHAPTER XXV.

COMTE PODEVIN DE PRÉGALANT.

PARTY spirit lately ran high round the town of Pastourol, where an election was to be held for a vacant seat in the Chamber of Deputies. The three candidates had each his committee, a great deal was done in the way of posters, and Comte Podevin de Prégaland, the candidate of the "Great Party of Order," scattered such piles of money about the rural districts that his superior claims became patent to the meanest intellects, of which sort, be it said without offence, there were not a few near Pastourol. The Count also personally canvassed the electors, and in so doing was much assisted by his son, the young Vicomte Léon de Prégaland, who could banter a peasant elector with a gay heartiness as good as music.

The Count was one of the pillars of the Bourse, a man who had made a huge fortune out of joint-stock companies and Government contracts, who had sat in the Corps Législatif as an official deputy under the Empire, and who had a great many hard things to say about Republicans. He never failed to impress upon his son that order and religion are the two things by which we must abide if we would enjoy a good Government in this world and Paradise in the next, and it was noticeable that he talked of Paradise as if it were a place which none but official candidates could enter.

Well, one afternoon, while the sun was hot and the reapers were mowing down the corn on the estate of Prégaland, young M. Léon took his straw hat and riding-whip and strolled down to the village to do some vote-fishing as usual, for the election was nigh at hand. On his way he fell in with the *garde cham-*

pâtre trudging along with his glazed cocked hat and leathern baldric, and this old worthy, who was always ready to take his share of a bottle when some one else paid for it, suggested that some useful canvassing might be done at the publican's, where he had seen some drovers and a knifegrinder enter but a few minutes before. So a quarter of an hour later there was M. Léon in the publican's parlour, sitting at the chief table with blue-bloused drovers to right and left of him, and M. Rinceot, the publican, bustling about with armfuls of yellow-sealed bottles. There were also brown parcels of tobacco scattered about the tables, to which those who pleased to help themselves were welcome; and these French drovers, being polite fellows, both drank and smoked largely to put their entertainer at his ease.

There was one in the room, however, who sat and drank apart, sulkily declining to be entertained, and this was Cramoiseau, the knife-grinder. One cannot give a good character of Cramoiseau. A crooked, ferret-eyed personage, with leathern gaiters and a fox-skin cap, he concealed from no one that he was a Radical. He was further suspected of hawking seditious literature about the country, though he had no pedlar's license. At any rate, the world mistrusted him.

Cramoiseau, then, having spent his morning in grinding scissors and knives, and mending rustic umbrellas, was sitting in the publican's parlour along with the drovers, and refreshing himself with a bluish piquette and Brie cheese, which he held down on a hunch of grey bread with his thumb. When a bottle of yellow-seal was proffered him, he refused it, but otherwise his behaviour was unobtrusive until the moment when young M. Léon opened political fire, and then Cramoiseau gave a series of those shrugs with which Frenchmen seem to shake a man and his arguments into the dust-bin of contempt.

Now the yellow-sealed wine of Pastourol was a snappish white juice that whipped the palate and brain, and a glass or two of it rendered M. Léon pink in the face and brilliantly disputatious. The drovers, knowing that there would be another supply of

bottles by-and-by if they were only civil and appreciative, cheered the Viscount's sallies, pounded their wooden shoes on the floor, and now and then whisked off their blue and white woollen nightcaps, and shouted, "Vivent les bons riches, Monsieur le Vicomte!"

But Cramoiseau only shrugged the more, and naturally M. Léon, being surfeited with the cheers of the drovers, grew hungry for the conversion of the knife-grinder, and sought to draw him into discussion. For a time sulky Cramoiseau would not be drawn, but at length impatience got the better of him, and he exclaimed curtly, "You're talking nonsense."

"What do you say?" inquired the Viscount, turning instantly vermilion and climbing very high on his dignity.

"I say that a young man who has learned no more sense than you had better go to school again," was the knife-grinder's aggressive answer, as he rose and snapped the big blade with which he had been cutting the Brie.

One need not remark that talk of school rings very ill in the ears of a young gentleman who has just been emancipated from his books; so young M. de Prégaland was stung to the quick, and it was in a right dashing voice that he replied, "I've learned at school that Republicanism is the party of brag, rag, and rapine. I don't say that all Republicans are rogues, but it's certain that every rogue is a Republican."

"That's news to me; for your father is not a Republican," retorted Cramoiseau, looking with a queer expression at the young Viscount, while the drovers, who had been laughing before, all rose abruptly to prevent a disturbance.

"My father!" cried Léon, clutching at the neck of a bottle, while his voice quivered with astounded anger, "explain what you mean, you rascal!"

"Tut! tut! go and ask your father how he made his fortune, and if he tells you the truth, come back and inform us in what party you class him."

Thus spoke the knife-grinder, who with one of his derisive

shrugs slouched from the room, paid for his cheese and wine over the pewter counter of the shop, and was gone, he and his travelling grindstone.

A couple of days later the Republican newspaper of Pastourol—a town of 20,000 souls or so—came out with a report of the quarrel, and extolled the knife-grinder. Probably Cramoiscan himself had taken the tidings to the newspaper office, for the details were minute, and the newspaper, commenting on the affair, remarked that “it was an odd thing in all conscience for any one bearing the name of Podevin to throw stones at ‘rapine.’” A few hours after this note appeared young Léon arrived in the town, went to the infantry barracks, and procured two sub-lieutenants to act as his seconds, and the same afternoon, as it was subsequently divulged, met the editor in a wood, and was wounded by him in the arm: thus obtaining what people call satisfaction.

It had been noticed on the estate and in the village of Prégaland that during the two days between the scene with Cramoiscan and this duel M. Léon was pale and self-absorbed. He did no canvassing, appeared to be unwell, and shunned society. When he arrived at the Pastourol barracks, and asked the sub-lieutenants to befriend him, that pair of warriors were surprised that a man in his excited state should think himself fit to handle foils; but when the duel was over, and M. Léon's arm was being bound up in lint, the seconds were still more surprised by their principal saying he should go away with his adversary, for that he wished to speak to him. The two late combatants did go off the field together, and M. Léon seemed to be asking questions which the editor was reluctant to answer.

At length they vanished, and must have remained long in company, for it was as late as ten o'clock when the two sub-lieutenants, leaving the small hôtel where their regiment messed, and sauntering towards the café, saw a dog-cart dash through the streets, up the road to Prégaland. The groom was driving, and M. Léon sat beside him with a face which, in the moonlight,

looked white as a sheet—so white, indeed, that when towards eleven the boy walked into his father's lounging-room with his arm in a sling and his large eyes staring fixedly, M. Podevin de Prégaland thought it was a ghost who had entered.

He was smoking and reading the *Puys*, but he dropped both cigar and paper before he could recover sufficiently to exclaim, "Good heavens, boy ! what's happened to you ?"

Then M. Léon advanced into the middle of the room, and as Frenchmen are unconsciously actors in all situations where a display of solemn feelings is required, he pointed with some dignity to his wounded arm, and said : " Father, I have been fighting for your honour. Some men accused you of being a swindler, and I gave them the lie. But will you tell me now how you made your fortune ?"

The apparition of a policeman—an apparition which at one time had haunted many of M. Podevin's dreams—or a deputation of deceased shareholders risen in their winding-sheets to ask him for unpaid dividends, could not have made the Count open his mouth with more stupefaction than he did at his son's question. It should be stated that M. Podevin de Prégaland was not physically fashioned to play a part in melodramatic episodes. His hair, moustache, and imperial were of a muddy brown, the effect of dye ; and you could tell at a glance that the Count gave much reflection to the means of combating corpulence. He had long been a widower, and had no other child but this Léon, on whom he doted, and whom he had purposed initiating soon into all the science of life as he understood it ; and the snug luxury of the room in which they both were at that moment showed that M. le Comte understood life well.

It was, in truth, no place for anything but pleasant talk and tobacco, and as though to prove this, there came a gentle tap at the door before M. Podevin had yet answered his son, and a butler in black silk stockings, gliding in, said, " Will Monsieur le Vicomte take supper since he was not in at dinner ?"

" Yes," cried the Count, greatly relieved by the interruption,

"Monsieur le Vicomte will sup. Have some tea made for him, too, and send down at once for the doctor, for my son has met with an accident."

The Count had hoped that Léon would take this as a hint to desist from his queries; but when the butler had gone out the boy repeated his question, and in more searching terms than before: "I entreat you to tell me, father, that there is no truth in the things I have heard to-day."

"Why, your mind is wandering!" screamed the Count, who had never suspected the lad of such audacity.

Then Léon made another step forward, and his voice became agitated. "My mind is quite calm," he said; "but remember I am your heir, and impute it only to the education you have given me if I cannot bear the thought of enjoying a fortune which would make me blush. Besides, I want to know how I am to act towards your accusers, who are numerous. Can I fling back their aspersions as infamous slanders, or must I submit to them, hanging my head?"

"Great heavens, I don't know what has come over boys in these days!" raved the Count in distraction. "All this is morbid drama—you've been reading novels; some bad books!"

"No; but I have heard a story which is worse than any novel," answered Léon, wretchedly. "Just hear it; and then I beseech you to assure me that there is not a particle of truth in it. I have been told that in 1848, when you had yet your fortune to make, you were a Red Radical, and were elected to the Legislature in that character; but that, after two years you suddenly betrayed the confidence of your constituents, and turned Bonapartist in order to obtain a railway contract from Government. During the Empire, added my informants, you started two or three companies which preyed upon the public, and left you rich while impoverishing or ruining the shareholders. There was even some talk of prosecuting you, but you were saved by the fact that you were an official deputy, and had several political adventurers of influence acting in collusion with you. Finally, say your accusers,

when the Franco-German war broke out, you speculated on our country's disasters, and, having obtained contracts for arms and clothing, supplied our unhappy soldiers with worthless rifles and shoddy clothes. In addition to all this, it is alleged that the title of Count which you bear is usurped, and has never been confirmed by any patent. Now, tell me, father, this atrocious story is not true."

"No, it's a lie!" gasped the Count, who had changed colour a dozen times during his son's implacable recital, and as he said this Léon heaved a great sigh of gratitude.

"God be thanked!" he exclaimed; "and, father, forgive me for seeming to doubt you. But now we have a duty before us. These slanders are being circulated against you in the town, and I have the names of some persons of note who have retailed them. We must go to these men and force them publicly to retract or meet them one after another till they or we are killed."

The boy said this with a flush on his brow, but also with a steady air of determination that showed he was in no temper to be put off.

Then his father quailed, and a numbness seized upon his heart, for this boy, who had just risked death for his sake and wanted to court it again, was the only being on earth whom he loved. "Listen, Léon, and leave all this to me," he faltered in a voice piteous in its entreaty. "You are too young to understand these things. By-and-by, when you are older, I will explain, and you will see that I was only a man of my time. I did no more than others; those who accuse me would have acted in just the same way if they had had the chance."

Saying this, the Count laid a hand pleadingly on Léon's arm, but the boy recoiled.

"Then there is some truth in it?" he moaned despondingly. "Oh, why did you not leave me my illusions! I was so proud of you."

People are not clear as to what occurred after this. An early riser in Pastourol avers that he saw young M. Léon hurrying

down to the railway station in the morning on foot and without luggage; and a fortnight later somebody reported that the Viscount had been heard of trying to enlist in Algiers as a common soldier. But these rumours were not credited. Not till after the election, when it was seen that despite his triumph the Count looked as if he had lost all his interest in life and become suddenly quite an old man—not till then did the world begin to conjecture: "Poor man," they said, "he has had trouble about his son: it appears the lad has turned out badly."

CHAPTER XXVI.

A REPUBLICAN PREFECT.

WHEN M. Rabagas, junior, cousin to the great Rabagas, had been appointed prefect of the Haute Champagne he felt like a man who has played his trumps well in the game of life. To have been a needy student dining in boiled-beef shops ; then a penniless barrister who dined but three days out of seven, and who was reduced to ranting gratis in defence of rioters, lampooners, and other political delinquents ; then to find oneself suddenly promoted to the honourable office of prefect with a salary of £1,200 a year, this was luck indeed. It tasted all the sweeter, too, as the younger Rabagas did not feel himself beholden overmuch to his greater cousin ; seeing that he himself had won a great many friends in the press, who hastened to sing his praises as soon as he was installed in a post of emolument, and had, apparently, no longer need of such services as they had rendered him hitherto—loans of five-franc pieces, free orders for the play, and such-like.

One newspaper said that in rewarding young Rabagas Government had shown a proper discernment of merit at once brilliant and modest ; a second remarked that the patriotic populations of the Haute Champagne would doubtless feel overjoyed at having at last a true Republican to rule over them ; a third said that young Rabagas ought not, in justice to himself, to be content with a mere prefectship, but should aspire to still higher destinies. All this our once struggling young friend naturally took for coin current. He had always looked upon Republicanism as government by the intelligent ; and, though not ungrateful by nature,

he preferred attributing his rise to his own merits rather than to the patronage of a kindly but perhaps too famous relative.

Young Rabagas would not have been human if he had not occasionally felt just a little jealous of the glory of the older Rabagas. It bored him to hear people say—"Are you M. Rabagas's brother, half-brother, cousin?" To all who congratulated him upon his appointment, our hero took care to say that he was not of the same way of thinking as his cousin on all political questions, and that in some respects he thought the said cousin was going too far.

Young Rabagas had ever been a sturdy Republican, but like all rational men, he was a partisan of stability. A dozen different prefects had succeeded each other in the Haute Champagne within less than seven years, and the new prefect thought it was time these frequent changes should cease. He wanted to feel like a permanent prefect, and hoped the populations would have the sense to understand that as he himself had got all he desired for the present, they, too, ought to be thoroughly satisfied; otherwise there would be no carrying on government at all. Young Rabagas expounded these views to the chief of the police, who was the first official functionary to call upon him; and he added that, while zealous to promote the public liberties, he regarded order as the bond of society and should never parley with faction.

The chief of the police bowed; but he did not consider these sentiments novel, for he had never yet heard a prefect say that he was content to stand as an "Aunt Sally" for Radical journalists and barristers to shy sticks at.

It is one of the happiest prerogatives of place-holding that it enables a man to pass the sponge clean over the mistakes of his past life, and to say that he has acquired "experience" from the day when he began to pouch the public moneys. Young Rabagas had been once a seditious sort of youth who barked ceaselessly at authority, as a puppy does at the moon; but this was in the times long ago, before France was ruled by prefects like himself.

He was intimately persuaded now that the era of civil troubles ought to close, and that France had passed through four bloody revolutions, exiled three dynasties, and elaborated fifteen Constitutions to no other end than that he—Rabagas—and six dozen other gentlemen of his way of thinking might wear silver-laced coats, and inhabit palaces furnished, lighted, and warmed by the people.

True, there might be other changes in the future necessitated by the march of progress ; but they must only be such as would tend to make young Rabagas first a senator, then a Cabinet Minister, and by-and-by, possibly, President of the Republic. To do him justice, young Rabagas did not aspire to be a crowned despot ; which shows wherein he differed from the Bonapartes.

Meanwhile, the new prefect of the Haute Champagne, being justly mindful of the decent pomp which should surround a Republican prefect, held his first official reception. He was waited upon by the bishop and canons ; by the general in command of the garrison and his staff ; by the president and judges of the civil and criminal courts ; by the whole corps of officers, cavalry and infantry ; and by a cohort of minor officials. All these persons came in their full uniforms or robes, bowed before him muttering some words of commonplace courtesy, and walked out. They took more than an hour filing by.

During the next week young Rabagas was occupied daily in returning their visits ; and he was everywhere received with the most punctilious politeness, but with not the slightest appearance of geniality. Not one of the higher officials, military or civil, expressed any wish to see him again ; the bishop even committed the mistake of addressing him by the name of his predecessor, but corrected himself with an apology by saying that there had been so many new prefects of late that their names were rather a burden to an old man's memory.

Somewhat ignorant of the ways of the *gravel monde*, young Rabagas thought that coldness must be the rule at official receptions ; and he resolved to give a ball, where he might make the

acquaintance of his *administrés* on more familiar terms. This impending festivity was announced in the prefectural journal, and liberal preparations were made in view of it. The flowers were ordered from Nice and the refreshments from Paris. Meanwhile, invitations were issued by the hundred, but only addressed to the nicest sort of people—officials and their families, the nobility of the province, and members of the liberal professions; the cards notifying that ladies would be received by the wife of the mayor (a prosperous retired grocer), which was necessary, as M. Rabagas was a bachelor.

On the evening of the ball the prefecture was illuminated by electric light, and a mounted guard of cavalry did duty at the entrance. Young Rabagas, curled, pomaded, and rigged out in his new uniform, stood at the top of the staircase with the grocer's wife beside him, to receive his guests; and during a couple of hours his energies were expended in shaking the hands of a long procession of subalterns in uniform and of second-rate people in dress-clothes. But none of the higher officials came, none of the nobility either, and scarcely any ladies except the wives of the municipal councillors, all tradesmen and Radicals, and a few coquettes connected with place-hunters and anxious to win the prefect's good graces.

When the band struck up it was found that there were thirty ladies (eighteen of them past forty) as against three hundred men. A waltz was played, and three intrepid couples started across the floor to set an example to the rest. By-and-by three others joined in the lugubrious fun; but the mass of male guests who could find no partners invaded the buffets, drank up the wine and negus, gobbled up the cakes and sandwiches, and then stormed the supper-room.

The place was carried with a rush, and the guests behaved like roughs on a racecourse. There was no pretence at order or civility, the supper degenerated into an orgie, each man snatching at what he could get and stuffing it into his mouth laughing. Champagne bottles had their necks broken off, so that the liquor

might be got at faster ; jellies and pies were cleared away in handfuls for want of forks.

Young Rabagas, mortified and furious, forgot (if he had ever known) that a host must bear the rudeness of his guests with at least an appearance of serenity ; so towards midnight he sent for the police to clear his rooms for him. Councillors, subalterns, barristers, journalists, and musicians were bundled out, the waiters assisting vigorously in their expulsion. One young gentleman, being found at the bottom of the staircase with a spoon in his hand, was given into custody for an attempt to steal. He happened to be the only nobleman in the house—a young marquis who had come in the train of one of the coquettes, and had been pushed out at the moment when he was carrying an ice to his lady love. That ice had found its way to his shirt-front, and part of it had got into his hair.

The new prefect's ball was much talked of in the Haute Champagne, as one may suppose ; but a Republican who meets with mishaps of this sort has always the consolation of asserting that he suffered from a base coalition of Monarchists. Young Rabagas did not fail to state this ; and in a feeling letter to the Minister of the Interior denounced the machinations that had sought to render the Republic ludicrous in his person. The Minister answered sympathisingly ; but hinted that the prefect had better give no more balls till he had thoroughly ingratiated himself with society in his department. Young Rabagas has been trying to do this ever since ; but he wonders sometimes how it is that he does not “get on better.”

CHAPTER XXVII.

COUNCILS-GENERAL.

NO ONE has yet been able to discover the precise use of the French Councils-General. Theoretically these public bodies keep an eye on the expenditure of their departments, but in practice one of two things happens: either a Council-General approves by a thumping majority the budget of its prefect, in which case it is just as though the prefect had been left to act uncontrolled; or the Council-General disapproves the prefect's budget, in which case that functionary snaps his fingers.

There is no reason whatever why a prefect should be concerned about the ill-humour of a Council-General. He makes out his budget as it suits him, and sets down so much for roads, so much for bridges, so much for the departmental hospital, asylums, and official cattle shows; and when he has done that he takes the surplus to his own private expenditure over income—euphemistically his *frais de représentation*—and distributes it impartially, though secretly, among all the other items; after which he goes down to the Council, in a silver-braided swallowtail, and says, "Here you are, put your seal to that."

If the Council carps at any particular item the prefect produces his vouchers, and goes on to observe that the item in question was sanctioned by the Communal Council or by the Conseil d'Arrondissement within whose jurisdiction the cost of the item was incurred; but if neither of these Councils sanctioned the item, then the prefect declares that it was incurred on his own authority, and with the approval of the Ministry of the Interior as a work "publicly useful for State reasons." The Council may

hold out even then, but it can scarcely discuss the expediency of State reasons without trespassing on politics, which are prohibited. What it can do is to throw out the item ; but in this event the prefect, if he knows his work, contrives to raise a political debate, arbitrarily suspends the Council for straying beyond its limits, refers his budget to the Council of State, packed with Government nominees, gets it passed by that dignified body, and then posts a private despatch to the Ministry of the Interior, claiming promotion in the Legion of Honour for having set his heel upon faction.

All this is plain and smooth sailing to a prefect bred in the correct traditions of office, and yet it need hardly be said that a prefect much prefers a subservient Council to a critical one. It makes not the slightest difference to the taxpayer whether a Council-General espouses his interest or not, for a disputed item must always pass somehow in the end ; but a vigorous Council butting against a weak prefect may cause the latter to be removed, not because he was in the wrong, but because he did not show sufficient energy.

This is why M. de Poingfermaye, who in the attractive city of Toularoural presides over the destinies of the department of Meuse-et-Garonne, pulled a wry face the other day when the Council-General elections brought him eight red-hot Radicals to four Opportunist Republicans.* Not that M. de Poingfermaye is

* It may be as well to mention here, for the benefit of the uninitiated reader, that "Opportunism" is an elastic form of policy devised by the late M. Gambetta, and adopted by his adherents ; and which, moreover, consists in professing the most liberal, most sweeping views on all things, but in applying them only at what seems an opportune or convenient moment. In fact Opportunism strongly resembles the doctrine of expediency professed by most English Whigs. A man may thus be at once a Liberal and a Conservative, proclaim himself a partisan of the broadest reforms, and yet constantly shelve their application on the ground that the moment is not an opportune one. The French Radical, on the contrary, only compounds with principles in cases of dire emergency, while the *Intransigent* or advanced Radical never compounds at all. Indeed the *Intransigent*, as his name implies, is the sworn foe of anything approaching a compromise. In the last French legislature he walked behind Citizen Clemenceau, while the ordinary Radicals formed

weak, bless his heart ; but the Councils-General being renewable by thirds every two years, these new elections to fill the seats of outgoing members have put the Opportunist party in a minority of four. This promises grievous unrest, disputes, and noise to M. de Poingfermaye ; and if we penetrate into that prefect's study two days after the election, we shall find him and Madame de P. bemoaning their ill-luck, as only an attached and patriotic couple can.

M. Tapesus, the editor of the prefectural journal, is present, and of course has to submit while the vials of Madame la Préfet's wrath are poured on him : " I told you last week your articles were not strong enough ! " exclaims that pretty lady, stamping her foot on the carpet.

" But indeed I wrote all you told me," remonstrates M. Tapesus, piteously.

" What do I care for that ; you ought to have invented stronger things yourself. What is the use of a journalist unless he invents strong things ? "

" My dear, I don't think Tapesus is to blame," protests the prefect, soothingly.

" Everybody is to blame, and you chief of all," ejaculates Madame, with flashes in her eyes : " The other day when those Bohemians, artists, students, and other bad characters gave a banquet in honour of that fiery-mouthed young advocate who had come from Paris to defend the Anarchist miners, I adjured you to have them arrested, and to make a great fuss about it in order to terrify the population. Nothing could have been nicer than my plan, for the Government papers in Paris would have said that you had quelled dangerous manifestations, and the Minister would have praised your zeal ; but no, you and M. Tapesus preferred to have your own way, simply because I am a woman ! "

a little clan apart, with such small fry as MM. Boyssset and Gatineau at their head. On the other hand, the Opportunists, with leaders like MM. Spuller, Ranc, and Paul Bert, formed the nucleus of M. Jules Ferry's majority.—ED.

"My dear, we could not arrest persons who began their dinner by drinking Monsieur Grévy's health."

"They toasted the President of the Republic—as if any one could not see through that subterfuge," retorts Madame, impatiently. "Well, now you can judge the effects of it. You have let that vulgar, sneering, garrulous M. Parolac get into the Council, and of course he will be returned to the Chamber next week, and it will serve you right. By the way we must invite Monsieur Parolac to dinner and be very civil to him, the abominable man!"

"Yes, we must invite him to dinner, but he won't come," moans the prefect. "Mind you point out, though, Monsieur Tapesus, that none of these new Radical councillors have announced themselves as Anarchists, and that, furthermore, I remained perfectly disinterested throughout the contest, so that the Government has not sustained any defeat."

"Yes, and please to add, Monsieur Tapesus, that we are not going to stand any nonsense," exclaims Madame de Poingfermaye, tartly, "our being disinterested is no reason why we should submit to be barked at by a pack of Communists in disguise!"

M. Tapesus makes his bow after these highly proper instructions, and the prefect and his wife being left alone, the lady draws from her pocket a bundle of papers and lays them composedly on the table: "That is all very well," says she, "but we must now come to business. Our household expenses have exceeded our income by a hundred thousand francs, and there are my dressmaker's bills, and your pair of phaeton horses, which will make fifty thousand more. These sums must go down in the budget."

"Yes, of course; I have been sleepless these two nights from thinking over it."

"It is no use being sleepless—we incurred these expenses in representing the country with fitting dignity, and the country must pay. If Government does not choose to give better salaries to its prefects, so much the worse; but I am not going to let my

children be despoiled by drawing such large sums from our own purses."

The prefect assents to this motherly piece of arguing: "The hundred and fifty thousand francs shall go into the budget as a matter of course, my dear. I was only harassed by the thought of the factious opposition we may have to encounter. That Parolac has a nose like a pointer's; he can scent out a flaw in the best cooked schedule ever devised, egad!"

"Well, if Monsieur Parolac makes himself objectionable, we will soon bring him to his senses, and suspend the whole Council," remarks Madame de Poingfermaye, authoritatively; "but now sit down, please, and go into these figures with me."

The prefect sits down; and here it may be stated that this mis-used public servant draws, as a first-class prefect, a salary of forty thousand francs to represent the country with dignity. To this sum the Council-General usually adds ten thousand francs for "representation"; and the prefect is, moreover, housed, warmed, and lighted free of charge; but what are £2,000, with free lodgings in addition, to a gentleman who has a becoming pride in his position?

Readers who recollect the trial of M. Janvier de la Motte, prefect of the Eure, some years ago, may have borne in mind by what processes this gallant official eked out his income, and these processes continue in honour to this day, for the good reason that nothing has been done to check them. There is to be sure a *Cour des Comptes*, but this conscientious audit-office devotes itself principally to verifying addition sums, not to inquiring into the genuineness of the items which make up the additions. Now and then the auditors discover that a sum of tenpence has been added up by mistake in the accounts of some hospital, and then there is a fine to-do; correspondence and telegrams being exchanged, and journeys of investigation being made which cost the tax-payers a thousand times the sum in dispute; and to be perfectly fair it should be added that the *Cour des Comptes* does occasionally wake up and lay its finger on an abuse consisting of

too much bath-brick in an asylum or an over-lavish supply of beans to prisoners.

But no auditor ever yet cavilled at the accounts of a prefect, because a prefect is a limb of Government, and Government will not suffer its limbs to be pulled about by arithmeticians. So a prefect who has expensive tastes begins by laying down the postulate that whatever he spends being for the public good it is the public who should pay. He has in his charge considerable sums voted for public works, and he appropriates the interest on these sums. He finds that some road can be cut for less than the original estimate and he pockets the difference, making things square with the contractor by promising him his patronage on future occasions; but a more favourite method than either of these is to summon a contractor and say: "Your bill is three hundred thousand, sit down and write three hundred and fifty—forty of the odd fifty will be for me, and the other ten for you."

It is not often a contractor refuses, for the prefect is the fountain of honour, and can promise the contractor the Legion of Honour, get him appointed mayor of a commune, obtain promotion for his son in the army or a Government office, and so forth; besides which the prefect takes care at starting to employ only contractors of the right sort. It is by such means that our excellent M. de Poingfermaye is going to enter his phaeton horses and his wife's dressmaker's bills into the prefectural budget. Let no one blame him, for M. de Poingfermaye is a strictly upright man, who would not filch a franc from a human soul, but then the public is not a human soul, but a sort of impersonal milch cow, at whose udders all high officials may tug without blame; and surely if it were put to the vote of Frenchmen, few of them would be so ungallant as to grudge Madame, his wife, a dozen extra dresses and bonnets a year for the public good?

Accordingly, after the prefect and Madame de Poingfermaye have been poring for an hour over columns of cyphers, Madame exclaims triumphantly, with ink stains on her fingers, "There, I

think we have it now. My dresses can go down in the new wing of the asylum ; the horses will be booked as police expenses, and the household charges can all be sunk in the new reservoir. The contractor is an honest man ; he wants a sub-prefectship for his nephew."

M. de Poingfermaye takes up his budget as amended and nods. "He shall have his sub-prefectship, but I must coach him as to the answers he will give, for that rascally Parolac is quite likely to move for a committee of inquiry and break the wretched fellow's heart with cross-questions."

"Don't you be silly enough to let him do any such thing," responds Madame de P., with fire. "At the first symptom of unpleasantness, launch some political taunt at Parolac. There is sure to be a noise ; all his party will take his part, and shout, and then we will suspend them as Anarchists." The prefect smiles, and sweetly enough, for he is a fatherly man, devoted to his wife and family. Madame gives him an affectionate pat on the shoulder, and he goes his way refreshed, to write an invitation to breakfast to the contractor who built the new wing of the asylum and the new reservoir.

In all probability that pleasant budget of his will fare rightly enough when the Council-General of Toularoural meets a few weeks hence ; for despite all the Parolacs scattered through France, Republican Councils are hoodwinked quite as easily as their Imperial predecessors.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A FRENCH SQUIRE.

M. DE CHAMPMENU, who lives in Touraine, is very anxious at this moment about his vines, which will turn out well enough if there be no frosts between now and the 10th of October. As the harvest has been plentiful and the yield of cherries and peaches from the orchards abundant, M. de Champmenu will have no reason to complain if the frosts keep away ; and he is even calculating that he may be able to buy that hectare of vineyard adjoining his own, and which belongs at present to one Crochut, a hard-fisted churl, who wants ten thousand francs for it. It will be a grim business to scrape all that money together, and the Champmenu household, consisting of Madame de Champmenu, Mademoiselle Clotilde de Champmenu, and M. Clovis de Champmenu, at present studying law in Paris, will have to go on cruelly short commons in the matter of new clothes and pocket money ; but then look at the vineyard in question, and see whether it is not worth all the pinching that human fortitude can bear.

It is rather more than a hectare and yields about thirty hogsheads of wine saleable at fifty francs the hogshead, thus making fifteen hundred francs in all. This gives a return of fifteen per cent. on the investment—or, say, eight per cent. net profit, if one takes expenses into account, and sets off the bad years against the good ; and M. de Champmenu well knows that, despite his outcries against his neighbour Crochut's rapacity, he is a lucky fellow to have the vineyard offered him for any sum less than twelve thousand francs.

The truth is, though, that Crochut has been bothered by the

phylloxera, which obliged him to pull up two-thirds of his vines and grow corn and beetroot instead, and he thinks of giving up vintaging altogether as a pursuit too uncertain for a man who likes to see his income flow to him in regular tides. M. de Champmennu, however, believes he has a secret against the phylloxera (most French squires do think so until that exciting mite has visited them), and one need not wonder therefore that he should be astir with the sun every morning, first to see how his own grapes have fared through the night, and then to glance with the eye of covetousness upon those of Crochut.

He has a rustic, weatherbeaten head and figure, has M. de Champmennu. His face is tanned to the colour of a brick, tufts of white hair, shaggy as furze, jut over his keen, cautious eyes; his hands are horny as a ploughman's, and from his soiled grey blouse, greasy felt hat, patched gaiters, and from the hunch of home-made bread and the onion which he eats as he strides along any one might mistake him for a peasant labourer. But he is a count, and an uncommonly proud one, who can quote the Georgics, recount his pedigree, or demolish Radical sophistries as readily as he can drive a hard bargain in selling the produce of his estate or clutch a poacher by the throat and drag him off to the gendarmerie. Out of doors he mixes familiarly with his humbler neighbours, haggles with them, overreaches them, drains a glass with them, and even swears at them; but inside his halls he seems to don his coronet, and there are scarcely a dozen families in the department who can boast of being on visiting terms with the ladies of his château.

The Count is of course a Royalist, but not one of the sulking sort, for he is not rich enough to despise Government favours. When his son has done studying law, he will bustle to get him a sub-prefectship, no matter what may be the party in power, for sub-prefectships bring six thousand francs a year, and it is M. de Champmennu's opinion that a young man may just as well draw this allowance from the nation as from the pockets of a struggling father.

So one fine morning our worthy nobleman, having got up betimes as usual to admire the Crochut property, is soliloquising over the future, which appears rosy to him: "Ten thousand francs, the rogue! those *roturiers* would shear the very hair off one's head; but it's a fine bit of ground. *Mon Dieu!* how well the sun looks glistening among those golden and purple grapes! Perhaps I shall be able to screw him down to nine thousand, though, what with the education these people get through cheap newspapers now-a-days they know the value of their own lands to a sou. Then there's Clotilde been asking me for a new piano; but that's absurd. The girl is already marriageable, and if I bought her a piano now it might remain on my hands next year. To be sure, I might deduct the value of it from her dowry; but somehow I must find her a husband who won't ask for any dowry. Those children are ridiculous, now-a-days, with their dowries. I'm not going to let my land be slit up during my lifetime. When I die, Clotilde and that precious Clovis of mine—who wants me to increase his allowance, the good-for-nought—shall share between them; till then I can manage the estate better than they can. *Mon Dieu!* what tints the sun does give to those vine-leaves!"

M. de Champmenu lapses into silent admiration, accentuating his feelings by masticating a small onion; but while he is so engaged there rises up from among the vines the venerable form of their owner, Father Crochut, who has been crawling about for an hour on all fours examining his grapes. He is a stooping, shrunken body, a beautiful specimen of the French agriculturist, nourished on lean pork and white wine, and he is three parts deaf into the bargain.

"Heigho!" bawls the Count, making a trumpet with his hands; "your vines don't get enough of the morning sun. I've just been observing them!"

Father Crochut rises to his hind legs and approaches the ditch which separates the two properties; it looks as if he had not life enough in him to hop over a franc piece; but, with no more

than a glance at the ditch, he clears it and stands by the Count's side.

"Good-morning, Monsieur le Comte," he says in a husky, drawling voice ; "I've been reflecting over our little affair, and it strikes me I can't sell my *hectare* for less than twelve thousand francs."

"Twelve thousand !" yells the Count, stopping bolt still with fury and indignation ; "twelve thousand ! why, it's not worth eight. I've been looking at the vines and thinking that seven five was the most any man in his senses would give for such a lot."

"Well, then, you can't be anxious to buy land that's worth so little," answers Father Crochut, with sly composure ; "to tell you the truth, too, I don't care much about selling. Next time the vintage fails I shall transform my *hectare* into an orchard and build a wall round it for peaches—I find I can make as much by them as by vine growing !"

"Why, you must be mad !" roars the Count, whose face has turned crimson, and whose eyebrows are bristling up like electric wires. "You'll build a peach-wall round your property and throw ten feet of shadow over my grapes ! I'd just like to see you—we'll settle that question in a law court, Father Crochut."

"I'm quite agreeable, for I should win my suit," answers Father Crochut, coolly rubbing some soil off his knuckles ; "it's my son who has been advising me in this matter, Monsieur le Comte, and he knows all about it, for he has just finished studying in Paris and is a barrister."

"He is a fool !" howls the Count, with intense feeling, and plunging his hands into his breeches pockets to resist the temptation of laying them violently on the shrivelled object before him.

"No, I assure you he is no fool," continues Father Crochut, quite unruffled ; "and I'll tell you what, Monsieur le Comte : if you'll give your daughter, Mademoiselle Clotilde, in marriage to my son, I'll let you have that bit of vineyard for nothing and ask no dowry either. There, one can't speak fairer."

Fairer, forsooth ! The Count stands glaring for a moment at old Crochut as if the latter had truly lost his wits. That such a one as Crochut, who once guided the plough, should have lands to sell and a son educated for the bar are things preposterous enough ; but that he should in the broad light of day claim for this hobbledehoy an alliance with the house of Champmenu is a piece of insolence outstepping all the bounds of profanation and audacity.

"Begone off my lands, sir," shrieks the Count, with a menacing gesture of his fist.

"Well, as you please, Monsieur le Comte," drawls old Crochut, unconcernedly ; "I know it would be a great honour for my son to marry Mademoiselle Clotilde ; but you see I'm willing to pay for the honour. My boy Minos is my only son ; he'll inherit all I have, and it may surprise you to hear that I am worth five-and-twenty thousand francs a year, not counting that bit of vineyard."

Five-and-twenty thousand francs a year is certainly a seemly income, and there is an involuntary subsidence in the Count's scornful wrath, for all which he makes a second gesture with his fist as he invites Father Crochut to decamp.

"Yes, yes, I'm going, Monsieur le Comte," answers the old man ; "but let me say one more word. You're not likely to be able to buy my vines, even if I let you have them for ten thousand, as every franc you have will be wanted soon for Monsieur le Vicomte, your son. Minos tells me that Monsieur le Vicomte has run up thirty thousand francs worth of debts in Paris, and I repeat the news to you, for there ought to be a fellowship between fathers, and I should be glad to be warned in time if such a mishap were to befall me."

Saying this, however, Father Crochut deems it prudent to put the ditch between himself and the stupefied Count, and accordingly he clears it anew, leaving M. de Champmenu with his eyes rolling and both fists clenched as if apoplexy were hovering round his grizzled poll.

Father Crochut's revelation has indeed come down like a blow

from a mallet on the wretched Count's head. But half an hour before he felt so prosperous and hopeful, and now all his prospects seem to have crashed down like a house of cards. Thirty thousand francs ! Good heavens ! where shall he ever find such a sum to save the honour of his name ? He shall be obliged to sell some of his fields at a loss, or mortgage them at ruinous interest—a thing he would not have done to rescue himself from eating dry bread for the remainder of his days.

Stunned, with heavy gait, and with his features awry as if ten more winters had just been added to his tale of years, the poor Count returns home to breakfast ; and, unfortunately, no doubt is possible as to the truth of Father Crochut's tidings, for a letter is lying on the table, and in it young Clovis de Champmenu has made a clean breast of all his embarrassments, winding up with a filial appeal for remittances.

It is a dismal breakfast that ensues ; for, although the Count does not care to sadden his wife and daughter by apprising them of his grievous affliction, they both perceive but too well that something is the matter.

Let it here be noted that, as M. de Champmenu sells the best of his fruits, poultry, and flocks in the market of Tours, his own board is generally covered with fruit of third quality, lean fowls, and so forth ; all of which gives the banquet a rather drear aspect when the mirth of the feasters does not make up for the poorness of the fare. However, after a few minutes Mademoiselle Clotilde, wishing to play the part of a dutiful daughter, and bring a smile, if possible, to her father's pale lips, exclaims, " Well, papa, have you come to terms yet with Father Crochut about the vineyard ? "

" No, and never shall," groans the Count, piteously, munching the drumstick of a tough chicken. " The man has got crazed by a priggish son of his who has come from Paris, and appears to order his father about as he pleases."

" Oh, fancy being ordered about by such a person as Monsieur Minos ! " laughs Mademoiselle Clotilde, who is a spirited young lady, by no means bad-looking, and fond of chatter.

"What, have you ever seen Minos Crochut, then?" inquires the Count, holding his drumstick in mid air.

"Oh, yes, I should think so; I've seen him mooning about our roads—a most learned and melancholy-looking object, with spectacles and a long coat. My puppy, Toto, was quite abashed by the sight of him the other day, and barked till he was hoarse, poor dear!"

Now, pray observe the perversity of the human race. If Mademoiselle Clotilde had spoken eulogistically of M. Minos, M. de Champmennu would not have failed to pour out all the vials of his sarcasm and nobiliary contempt on that exemplary young man's pate; but hearing Mademoiselle revile the heir to the famous vineyard and the twenty-five thousand francs a year, what should M. le Comte do, forsooth, but stand up testily for M. Minos: "And pray why shouldn't a young man wear spectacles, miss?"

"Oh, papa!"

"M. Minos's spectacles come, no doubt, from his having wearied his eyes by overwork," proceeds the Count warmly, and gnawing with defiance at his drumstick; "And I'll tell you, miss, that a studious young man who wears out his eyes is better than one like that amiable brother of yours, who wears out his father's purse with thirty thousand francs' worth of debts. Let me add that M. Minos is a man of honour, full of principles and dutifulness, and with a fine inheritance before him."

Here let us leave M. de Champmennu. If this were the first chapter of a novel we might write ninety-and-nine more most profitably, in recounting how Mademoiselle Clotilde withstood with romantic energy the scheme of marrying her to M. Minos. But this is not romance, and those who know what magic there is to a French squire in the sound of five and twenty thousand francs a year landed property, may possibly conjecture that M. de Champmennu will end by accepting young Crochut as his prospective son-in-law, provided the latter only consents to discard his ugly name for one more tuneful, and adorned with a particle.

CHAPTER XXIX.

POET WORSHIP.

THE French are not a poetical people. The unelastic terseness of their language—"froide langue de mathématicien," as Lamartine called it—adapts itself better to logic or epigram, which is but logic with a sting on, than to the dreamy ecstasies of fancy. Victor Hugo cramming his hallucinations into alexandrines is like a man knocking wedges into a frame with a hammer; and Victor Hugo's more classic predecessors, who were slaves to scansion, set periods, and unities, were obliged to surround each fine thought with a roll of declamatory verses, so that it fluttered like a solitary standard amid a battalion of prim soldiers.

Then there is ridicule, which the French have found to border so closely on the sublime that a poet, who launches his sublimity on the public ear, is never sure that it will not come back to him in the form of a laughing echo. This is chilling work. How be poetical in the sacred sense of that distinguished word, when every comparison drawn from the terrors or graces of nature—forked lightning, flower beds, craggy rocks, or precious stones—have been hackneyed and rehacked till the smallest of Parisian *gamins* grows merry over them? The enthusiasm of young rhymesters is nipped in the bud by the frigidity of these ironical times, and that is why poets of genius have disappeared.

But, if poetry be dead, the French continue to be what they have always been—the best versifiers in pandom. There is not a young Frenchman of wit but can turn you a sonnet as easily as he can laugh, or better still, a song with a jingle of smart rhymes

and a point thrown in to make the tail curl. This is not poetry, only the small change of it, but the more successful handlers of such small change become well-courted personages now and then, like M. Coppée and M. Manuel—two gentlemen who rhyme the charms of domestic life in verses smooth and comforting as Messrs. Somebody's delicious food for infants. It was natural and proper that in an epoch of gold, silk, and champagne worship, homely bards like this should arise. They are French "lakists," at whom no Parisian James and Horace Smith have yet poked fun, and to encourage them is one of the duties which the *grand monde* discharges with the sincerest pleasure.

As in referring to Madame de Réséda we had the honour to state that this gracious lady took the most enlightened interest in art matters, it will surprise no one to hear that she is patronizing a young poet of M. Coppée's school, who, thanks to her, will soon become a credit to his country. To judge of him, we have only to attend the Hôtel de Réséda on a night when all the hostess's friends have been convoked to hear the last penned verses of this promising young man, whose name is M. Poupette.

M. Poupette did not start in life by carrying a parcel of his earliest works to a publisher's, for he would have been shown to the door with all the regard due to a man whose produce is unsaleable. His mannerizing was exactly what it would have been had he been a contemporary of Malherbe's; for if there be but one road to success—and that the public one—for novelists, journalists, and painters, there are two for the poet, who may become famous by the sole help of the great if he cannot conquer the universal suffrage of the small. Had M. Poupette begun to write some years ago he would have paid his court to the Princess Mathilde, who sponsored M. Coppée aforesaid and extended to poetry what little official countenance was bestowed on it under the Second Empire; but, times being altered, he put his faith in the Royalist party, and easily heard of the patroness he wanted in Madame de Réséda.

He had seen this lady at the opera, and felt all his poet's admiration burn at the sight of her raven hair decked with diamond Bourbon lilies ; and of her dress, blended of those grateful neutral tints which illustrated the period. So he wrote to her a poet's letter, telling of the burning inspirations of his soul, and craved leave to dedicate to her a volume of his fugitive thoughts—which volume he shortly after forwarded, well printed at his own cost.

It is always soothing to receive a dedicatory book of poems. If suitably bound and enriched with one's coat of arms—as was M. Poupette's gift—it looks well on the drawing-room table, where it has the privilege of exciting the envy of one's good friends. Then there is the satisfaction, always great in a person of Madame de Réséda's mind, of sustaining a struggling genius and of feeling that if he earns celebrity, the world will remember who was his benefactress, and crown her with a share of his glory. Accordingly, M. Poupette was invited to dinner and read half his book to the other delighted guests while they took tea later in the evening ; and of course none of these guests could neglect to buy a copy of the works that had so charmed them, especially when Madame de Réséda made a point of apprising them where the publisher lived.

But this generous lady did more in her kind anxiety that the book bearing her arms should be widely circulated ; for at a charity bazaar in behalf of "*L'Œuvre des Châvres*" she kept a bookstall, stocked with five hundred copies of M. Poupette's poems, and, all these works being sold off at a premium, she was enabled both to pay the publisher the full cost price—not the trade price—and to relieve the bard at the same time. Nothing can be more saintly and ingenious than this way of promoting literature, one's own praises, and almsgiving all at one sweep ; and from this hour, when M. Poupette's book sailed into a second edition, when sundry of the public, attracted by the advertisements concerning it, bought the work from curiosity, and when a few newspapers, following in the wake, reviewed the poems with

courtesy, it may be said that our author had only to step easily and gracefully up the ladder which is now raising him to eminence ; for his rise may be depended on.

After he has read a few more poems at Madame de Réséda's house, and inscribed some odes and sonnets to those of her intimates whom she wishes to please, she and those intimate ladies will use their influence with the Archbishop of Paris to get M. Poupette's poems given away as a prize-book in the schools patronized by the Church ; and one day, in a conciliatory spirit, the Education Minister, despite his Republicanism, will appoint M. Poupette "Officier d'Académie" — an honorary but somewhat coveted distinction, which confers the right of wearing two silver palm branches and a violet ribbon on the lappet of one's dress-coat. Then the ladies will turn their eyes towards the Théâtre Français, and by working on the Director of Fine Arts—and perhaps by addressing a pretty note of supplication to the theatrical queen of the hour—procure the acceptance and performance of a small verse comedy, in one or two acts, by M. Poupette. Verse comedies, if short, are never harshly judged by the critics, so M. Poupette will be sure of a *succès d'estime* ; and this will give the Fine Arts Department a pretext for recommending him for the Legion of Honour, and, if he cares for it, of placing him in one of those numerous snug berths—State librarianships, academical rectorships, or what not—which Government keeps for authors of stingless talents.

In course of years, when his hair is grizzled—and by that time there will probably have been one or two more revolutions, so that he will have transferred his allegiance from Madame de Réséda to some one else—M. Poupette will become a candidate for the Académie Française ; and, as his poems will have wounded nobody, excited nobody, and made nobody envious, he will be elected with alacrity, while some writer ten times more popular, but twenty times more waspish (possibly M. Sarcy), will still be chafing at the gate. So believe that it is with no feeling of reluctance that Madame de Réséda's acquaintances come to hear

the newest idyll of a young man who is promised such smoothly lustrous destinies.

To begin with, "tea and verses" are one of those intellectual treats which particularly distinguish the true *grand monde* from the world of the Bourseocrats; and Royalist ladies would be as ashamed of owning that they had not heard a few hundred verses every winter as of confessing that they had not attended Brother Ignivore's sermons, or, done something towards furthering that benevolent "*Œuvre des Chauves*." Therefore, the drawing-room is crowded; the women in their lustrous toilettes sit in rows round the central table, and behind them in corners and next the walls stand black masses of men, among whom are the Duc de Sangbleu and M. Pistache, with their crush-hats under their arms. There is but one man in the inner circle, and that is the poet, who has a nice butter-coloured hair and beard, and wears rather wildly cut clothes, as if he had recited some of his verses to the tailor whilst the latter was taking his measure.

At eleven o'clock the hostess turns and asks M. Poupette in a beseeching voice, as if the agreeable idea had only just occurred to her, whether he will kindly read something of his composition, whereat M. Poupette fumbles in his coat tail with modest confusion, as if it were by the merest hazard he discovered there a manuscript of a pound's weight tied with pink ribbon. There is a flattering murmur of thanks and expectancy, during which M. Poupette takes his seat at the table, having on his right hand the customary silver tray, with decanter, tumbler, sugar-basin, and phial of orange-flower water. The ladies close their fans, sit back, and converge their glances with pensive interest on M. Poupette's butter curls; the gentlemen count the pendants on the chandelier, and M. Poupette, having coughed and drawn down his wristbands, suavely reads out his title: "*La Giroflée: an Idyll of City Life*."

This "*Giroflée*" is a touching poem, and nothing obliges us to conceal that it treats of a young poet who passed through a trial which may well serve as a caution to other poets. His name

is Peter, for such names as Oscar and Fernand, in which poets of Alfred de Musset's insalubrious school revelled, must now be discarded : we live in regenerating times when manly heroes must have strong simple names. Peter, then, having wooed a gentle religious girl by offering her a humble pot of wallflowers, was accepted as her suitor ; they were married, and their union was crowned by the birth of an infant. It was sweet to see them nestle as they did in a bower of all homely joys. They lived on the seventh story of an old house in the Latin Quarter, being thus in immediate neighbourhood to the blue vault of heaven ; a bullfinch awakened them with his early matins ; the wailing of their infant lulled them to happy rest at night, and the wallflower grew in luxuriance till its perfume was the pride and solace of all the neighbours.

But one day Peter, while out for a walk and musing over his verses on the pavement of Paris (here seventy-two stirring lines of comparison between the peacefulness of that seventh story and the turbulent corruption of the pavement below), Peter saw flash by him a barouche bearing a Circe seductive in golden hair and silk attire. It needs no reflection to see that this lady is the incarnation of that turbulent state of things described on the pavement, and as she passes she drops a glance on Peter, who forthwith conceives for her an unholy passion. Good-bye to peace from that hour ; Peter derives no comfort from the voice of his infant calling to him in the dead of night ; he expresses himself in unrepeatable terms as to the bullfinch ; and the wallflower, blighted by the desolation of this once sunny home, loses its petals one by one.

The poet's time is passed in rambles through the city in search of his Circe, and at length he finds her palace, but only to be repulsed by the boastful menials who mount guard at its door. He perseveres, however, as poets ever do, composes an ode in her honour, and waylays her at the street corner in order to throw the written avowal of his passion into her carriage as she passes.

She does pass ; the wheels of her chariot grate on Peter's ear, the blood mantles to his cheek, and he rushes forward ; but, just as he has raised the hand that contains his ode, the scales fall from his eyes. The bloom on that shapely face is due to paint, that golden hair which glints in the sun is false (here six-and-thirty lines to prove that the hues of bullfinches and wallflowers are not false), and the night finds Peter still standing at the street corner and merged in remorseful meditation over his folly. At last he turns homewards, climbs his staircase on tiptoe, and enters the room which he had so faithlessly deserted.

Everything is hushed to sleep ; even the infant is silent, and Peter as he approaches the window-sill notes that the wallflower, first pledge of his lawful affection, has but one trembling petal left. This sight moves him to the quick, and, standing over the flower, he pathetically soliloquizes on the past joys of which he now feels so unworthy. (He is supposed to be telling his own story in the poem.)

Je pensais doucement au temps de ma jeunesse
Où j'épousais Angèle ;^o et, tout plein d'allégresse,
Meublais mon paradis.
Angèle travaillait ; nous mangions le soir
Une soupe sans apprêt, du bœuf sec, du pain noir ;
Le matin des radis.
Puis l'hiver, quand tombaient la neige, le verglas,
Je soufflais dans mes doigts, saintement, jamais las
D'attendre le printemps.
Ma frileuse Angèle, sans souhaiter du bois,
Se chauffait aux sons chaleureux de ma voix,
Aux flammes de mes chants !

As he utters these beautiful lines a tear falls from Peter's eye on to the wallflower. But lo ! this flower, which had faded during his infidelity, blossoms anew when watered by his repentance. Its petals come back to life, its perfume fills the room, the dawning sun breaks over a scene which the bullfinch gladdens with a carol of blithesome pardon ; and Peter, restored to the affections of his hearth and to the wholesome elements of happiness above

enumerated, resolves that he will never more think of going astray.

Now what can be more refreshing than this poetry? Can we grudge M. Poupette the warm applause he receives, or dispute the verdict of Madame de Réséda, who vows she would not exchange "La Giroflée" for all the lurid works of Byron or Théophile Gautier.

CHAPTER XXX.

SEASIDE "COLLABORATION."

GARDENERS' ALMANACKS, which tell at what season one should sow peas and spinach, are silent as to any sowings for the month of August ; and yet that is the month in France when the seeds of genius are most plentifully scattered over sheets of paper, which will bloom out all winter time into three-act comedies and one-volume novels. August is also the pairing season for French authors—not the season when they marry, but the time when they start off in couples for seaside villas, there to shed the seeds of their intellects, as above said. Partnership has become an established custom in French literature, as in most other things French. It takes half-a-dozen Frenchmen to conduct a stock-jobber's business, very often four to own a racehorse, two to manage a theatre, three to produce an operetta, and at least a couple to write an attractive comedy of manners.

The exceptions constituted by MM. Dumas, Sardou, and Feuillet, only prove a rule illustrated by such long-standing and fruitful partnerships as those of MM. Meilhac and Halévy, Chivot and Duru, Clairville and Siraudin, Leterrier and Vanloo, Erek-mann and Chatrian, Barrière and Madame de Prébois ; and to these popular names may for the future be added those of M. Victor Cocasse and the poet Poupette, who have gone down to Le Tréport to write together a comedy to be called *Les Chutes de Madame Virginie*, and which they mean to be the great success of the next theatrical season.

M. Poupette is the elegiac writer whose sweet *Giroflée* we have spoken of ; and M. Victor Cocasse is the renowned author of the

Sardine à l'Huile and *Le Pêché de Madame*. Between them there is little in common, for M. Poupette is the bard of home joys, and M. Cocasse is the dramatizer of questionable episodes; but M. Cocasse has reached a time of life when ideas begin to fail him, and he is constantly on the prowl after young and rising authors with whom he may strike up a collaboration—they furnishing the plots, and he the dramatic ordinance of the same. The bargain, be it noted, is quite a fair one; for to a man having no knowledge of the stage a good plot is of little more use than a block of stone to one who is no sculptor.

Now, there is no writer on the Boulevards, or about them, who can chisel a stone into shape as M. Cocasse can; not one who can better trim a dialogue, contrive effective situations for the close of each act, and send his audience home with their ears tingling. He is a stout and jolly personage, with drooping grey moustache and imperial, a broad hat-brim, and with the forefinger and thumb of his left hand browned to a walnut colour by the moisture of countless cigarettes. He looks like a pensioned gendarme in easy circumstances, and he rather startled rosy, yellow-haired M. Poupette when he buttonholed him one evening at the "Français," and proposed that they two should mount a "machine" together.

M. Poupette had never heard any work of literature described as a "machine," nor had he ever met a man of letters so uncommonly shrewd in all the business details of authorship as M. Cocasse. This gentleman made little use of the terms "one act," "three acts," "five acts;" he talked of two, nine, and twelve per cent. piéces, alluding thereby to the amount of profits which a dramatist is entitled to levy, and he was particularly luminous about the extra gains to be made out of Belgian and provincial managers.

Such as it was, though, the talk was not wholly unpleasant to M. Poupette. The poet had long cherished a notion of writing a comedy, and had only been deterred by the recollection of two tragedies in five acts which he had sent to the Odéon in the days

of his literary novitiate, and which had been thankfully declined. He had sense enough to suspect that he was wanting in the dramatic knack, and he well knew that M. Cocasse possessed this knack to the full ; on the other hand M. Cocasse, glancing at M. Poupette's brow, which bulged out like a football, and at his eyes, which glowed in the depth of caverns, felt that there must be a stock of ideas in this youth which would yield like a mine if worked judiciously. So the two very soon came to an arrangement in the café of the "Français," drinking beer ; and before parting that night M. Cocasse stipulated that they should address each other as "*tu*" thenceforth, for greater familiarity and convenience.

A fortnight later M. Cocasse, in a suit of yellow nankeen, and M. Poupette, with a panama thatch over his fevered pate, started for Dieppe ; and on the road from Dieppe to Le Tréport by diligence the poet first broached his plot for the intended comedy. The flat, dusty road lay straight for miles before them ; the three horses, two brown and one white, jogged placidly along, switching flies away with their tails ; the coachman, in a blue blouse, winked to Norman fish-girls passing with hampers on their heads ; and the pair of authors, perched under the hood of the "*impériale*," could descry an unbroken expanse of beetroot fields and willow stumps stretching around them as far as the eye could gaze.

It was under the inspiration of this fine scenery that M. Poupette exclaimed, "The play must treat of a bride brought up amid touching rural life, and coming to Paris to lose her illusions. We will call it *La Chute de Madame Virginie*."

"*Les Chutes*," answered M. Cocasse, accentuating the article in the tone of one who would offer a gentle reproof ; "we have seen plenty of solitary *chutes* in recent pieces, and the public wants novelty. Virginie must lose her illusions several times."

"Very well," agreed M. Poupette, pensively ; "but we must show her retaining her innocence of soul in spite of all."

"Yes, that will be new," said M. Cocasse : "and we must

bring out her husband in strong colours ; yet he mustn't be a naval captain or an engineer, because those professions have been overdone."

"I was thinking of making him a German," rejoined M. Poupette.

"Yes, that will do, because he can be killed, if needful, without exciting any sympathy," observed M. Cocasse sagaciously ; and about this time the diligence rumbled past the mediæval church of Le Tréport towering above its flight of a hundred and twenty steps, jolted over the smooth stones, and past the snowy villas of the Parade, and drew up before a queer little hotel facing the sea.

Now Le Tréport is a watering-place, neither so big as Dieppe nor so small as a fishing-village ; it has a reputation of being at once quiet and gay, and the consequence is that it is always full and noisy. MM. Cocasse and Poupette having come thither to work and look after their health, have written for rooms beforehand—rooms with a fine sea-view, for M. Poupette's sake, M. Cocasse being able to work equally well opposite a brick-wall or a chimney-stack—and they arrive with a settled purpose of mixing in no society whatever. But it is easier to purpose in such cases than to perform. M. Cocasse has modestly reckoned in forgetfulness of the fame attaching to his name and that of M. Poupette ; and he is reminded of his omission by finding the hotel landlord and a local reporter waiting to offer blandishments as soon as he and M. Poupette alight.

No Prince gets such a reception in a French hotel as an author of celebrity. Landlord and waiters make much of a Prince, smirk to him, and flatter him nobly ; but the greeting awarded to an author is hospitable and cheery—a happy blending of respect, familiarity, curiosity, and contempt most flattering to literature.

MM. Cocasse and Poupette are shown by the landlord in person to the brightest third-floor apartments in the house. The worthy man, waddling in front of them, assures them in loud and friendly tones of his admiration and devotion. They shall want for nothing

so long at they are under his roof. He will see to them himself, and let them only leave the composition of their menus and the choice of their wines to him, and they shall be satisfied. Trouble, forsooth! it is no trouble, but an honour. Has not he—the landlord—laughed till the tears ran out of his eyes at the *Sardine à l'huile*; and can any service on his part ever repay that intellectual treat? All this is wheezed out in the hearing of a pack of waiters and chambermaids who have hied up from all the stories to stare at the famous author of the *Sardine à l'huile*, and also in the hearing of the local reporter, who follows them like a shadow, taking copious notes as to their bedroom furniture and their articles of personal apparel.

M. Cocasse, who pays his way everywhere in the small coin of good nature, is very affable to the whole throng, and particularly so to the local reporter, who introduced himself at the outset as “a humble brother in letters.” M. Cocasse shook hands with him and told him of the pleasure he always felt at meeting representatives of “the valiant provincial press,” for he well knew that if he had not done this his literary brother would have gone off and inserted spiteful paragraphs about him, which would have been undesirable. M. Cocasse likes to be everywhere surrounded by an atmosphere of smiles; and he succeeds so well in his wish that before he has been in the hotel an hour all the boarders and menials are talking about the amiability of the bluff author.

The landlord takes care to apprise his visitors that, although the two distinguished men of letters will, as a rule, dine in their rooms, he has obtained a promise that they will come to the *table-d'hôte* on Sunday, and this prospective exhibition of the two celebrities of course acts as a most pleasing stimulus on the happiness of all present.

Meanwhile the rumour of the two authors' arrival having spread through the town, the Mayor of Le Tréport comes courteously to leave a card; after him the director of the Casino obtains access to their rooms, and presents them each with a free card of admission to his establishment, with power to use his bathing

machines gratis ; and by-and-by comes the director of the local Orphéonists, who obsequiously begs their acceptance of reserved tickets to the whole series of concerts which he intends giving.

On each and all of these personages M. Cocasse bestows his accustomed blithe welcome ; but when they have all departed, and when the authors have discussed a really admirable little dinner, washed down by wines drawn from the farthest recesses of the hotel cellar, shrewd M. Cocasse remarks to his partner, "Look here, Poupette, please remember that we have come here to write *Les Chutes de Madame Virginie*, and not to be humbugged. All these people will be wanting us to compose them a charade for some charity performance ; you'll have to sing chorus with me, and tell them politely to go and be hanged."

"Still one ought to repay kindness by kindness," remonstrated M. Poupette, whose young heart has been not a little touched by the civilities shown him.

"Oh, the beggars will pay themselves fast enough," rejoins matter-of-fact M. Cocasse ; "we shall have them all turning up in Paris, and asking for play orders ; and of those they shall have their fill : but a charade means three days' work, and I work three days for no man without pay."

"That is a painfully unromantic view to take of literature," observes M. Poupette, with a deprecatory smile.

"That may¹ be," is M. Cocasse's answer, as he pours some cognac into his coffee-spoon, and then sets fire to it to make himself a *gloria* ; "but if I had dealt in romance, I should have been dining to-day off bread-and-cheese."

And this is true enough, for M. Cocasse has made his way by looking after his dues with no wandering eye. He roams nowhere without a note-book, in which he jots down all the good things he hears to make use of them ; but in return for good things which he himself emits he expects coin ; and when asked to write something in a lady's album he scribbles simply, "*Je suis Cocasse*," which makes people laugh, and serves quite as well as a sonnet.

M. Poupette, however, is moulded of softer clay, and twenty-four hours have not elapsed before an adventure befalls him which causes the deepest disgust to his partner. For in roving along the shingle on the first morning after his arrival, whom should M. Poupette meet but those two fascinating ladies, Mesdames de Lestincelle and de Pomponnette, who have come to bathe and amuse themselves at Le Tréport—of course without their husbands. Now Mesdames de L. and de P. well know that the poet Poupette has been brought to light by their two Legitimist enemies, Mesdames de Réséda and Mignonnette; and, being both of them Bonapartists to the core, they think that nothing would be finer than to seduce the poet from his allegiance to the Faubourg. Besides, Madame de Lestincelle is one of those ladies to whom flirting is a more necessary pastime than eating and drinking, and having spent the Paris season in making a deputy and two attachés become lunatic; she conceives the idea of beguiling seaside tedium at the expense of M. Poupette's peace.

"Oh, Monsieur Poupette," she says gleefully, "it must have been Neptune himself who threw you on these shores to charm the solitude of two lonely women; and now we are going to appropriate you. Madame de Pomponnette and I have already a scheme for getting up theatricals in behalf of the Norman Hospital for Stammerers, and you shall write us a charade in three acts, which we will perform ourselves at the Casino."

Poor M. Poupette remembers the warning of his partner Cocasse; but how be mercenary in face of such a bewitching vision as this? Imagine a vivacious brunette, dressed in a wonderful combination of buff unbleached linen and violet silk. She wears amethyst earrings; a big amethyst brooch peeps under the long ends of her lace cravat; and round her waist is a belt with garnet knobs, supporting an *aumônière*, from which hang in a glittering cluster a fan, a purse, a smelling bottle, a gold pencil, an enamel looking-glass, and a watch. On her head a white sailor's hat with violet streamers is jauntily set; and her small hands, covered

with gloves of *peau de Suède*, reaching far up the arms, are occupied, one in carrying a pug dog, the other in holding a sunshade.

M. Poupette is not proof against allurements like these, and, like a well-bred man, he asks and obtains leave to carry the pug dog, and an enchanting hour is spent by him in strolling along the beach and nodding enraptured assent to all the plans which the ladies form for the disposal of his time. It is to be noted that when ladies are good enough thus to lot out the hours of an artist or literary man, they leave him not five minutes for work, concluding apparently that he gets through his labours at night while other people sleep. It therefore follows that Mesdames de Lestincelle and de Pomponnette ordain things so pleasantly that M. Poupette's *Chutes de Madame Virginie* slips altogether out of his recollections. But luckily vigilant M. Cocasse is on the look out.

A turn in the beach brings the party in sight of this gentleman, who is standing on the keel of a fishing boat and sweeping the horizon with a telescope. He has scented mischief in the poet's prolonged absence; he has come out to search for him, and on deservying him in the custody of ladies, he makes no difficulty about striding up to claim his own.

"Ah," he says, gallantly, but firmly, "my friend Poupette belongs to me in the morning, and he can only be yours in the afternoon. Four hours' work a day is absolutely necessary to write *Les Chutes de Madame Virginie*, which you will applaud next winter."

"Oh, but that is downright tyranny!" exclaim both the ladies together; "and we won't applaud your comedy at all."

M. Poupette, seeing Madame de Lestincelle annoyed, looks wretched, and clasps her pug dog with silent despair; but with an authoritative hand stony M. Cocasse lifts the animal out of his arms and restores him, snarling somewhat, to the fair owner.

Five minutes afterwards, M. Poupette is trudging back plaintively to the hotel, and listening in dejection to M. Cocasse's

rebukes. "Remember, Poupette, that we have come here to work. Look at me ; I regard all the other sex as playthings, and only look after them in recreation hours."

"You are terribly unromantic," moans M. Poupette.

"Because romance doesn't pay," responds M. Cocasse, practically enough.

CHAPTER XXXI.

M. LE PRÉSIDENT DE ST. CODEFICHE.

THE POET POUPETTE was much put out by the necessity of working four hours every morning, instead of admiring jelly-fish on the beach of Le Tréport with Mesdames de Pomponnette and de Lestincelle. His enforced industry, however, had this effect, that the first act of *Les Chutes de Madame Virginie* was completed in uncommonly little time—a fact which quickly became known to the inquisitive visitors at the hotel where he and M. Victor Cocasse resided, and afforded them food for much delightful conversation. M. Cocasse is a *bon prince*; and having got his first act safe, admitted the necessity for a day or two's relaxation; but he would have liked that M. Poupette should take this relaxation with him, and not in ladies' society, for his thirst after "ideas," which he may convert into dramatic prose, is only to be slaked by constant pumping.

Not content, indeed, with pumping M. Poupette of a morning, M. Cocasse has laid hands on an English man of letters, Mr. Magenham Boneham—come to France to look up adaptable comedies out of the *répertoire* of fifty years ago—and spends his afternoons' cross-questioning this obliging genius about British customs and eccentricities. M. Cocasse, indeed, regards a talkative Briton as a godsend, for it was one of this kind who, by informing him that the Attorney-General was compelled to hang, with his own hands, all convicts sentenced to death within a mile of Temple Bar, supplied him with the materials for his memorable Ambigu drama, *Sir Thonson*.

We all remember how in this famous piece, now become

classical, the Attorney-General and the Lord Chancellor being rivals in the affection of the Duchess Bessie, the former inquired into the antecedents of the latter, and had no difficulty in discovering that he belonged to a secret gang of coiners. Arraigned for this offence before the Tribunal of Habeas Corpus, the Chancellor was, by an exercise of his enemy's prerogative, tried in the room over the archway of Temple Bar, and the Attorney-General, having disguised himself as a City trader, contrived to be elected foreman of the jury, and so brought in a verdict of guilty on all counts, "without extenuating circumstances." There are few things more telling than the scene in the last act, where the Attorney-General, having ascended the scaffold in his state robes, to hang his rival, ascertains, just as he is slipping on the noose, that this criminal but penitent dignitary, who has just completed his twenty-fifth year, is his own son by a clandestine marriage!

It was "*Sir Jhonsonn*" that put the seal to M. Cocasse's reputation, and it seems that he is already purposing to indite a new drama of London life out of the hints of Mr. Magenham Boneham. In this fresh work, to be called *Les Mystères du Mansion House*, the Wapentake, the Riding, and the Heriot—three trusted officials who command the Beefeaters and are obliged to taste all the dishes served to the Lord Mayor in public banquets—will probably play leading parts.

All this shows that Parisian literary men when they go a-bathing do not pass their time in vain frivolities; but what shall be said of the other Parisians staying in the two authors' hotel? It always does one's heart good to see excursionists from the French capital taking things easily by the salt water, for many of them believe themselves to be grave folk in Paris, and they come to bathe with a genial purpose of throwing off their gravity.

Look at the spectacled gentleman, for instance, who has a bedroom next to M. Cocasse's, and has already struck up a pleasant friendship with that writer. His name is M. le Président de St. Codefiche, and it seems to him very piquant to chat with a popular

playwright, for he is a presiding judge of renowned erudition, and never smiles in the capital lest it should compromise his dignity. He is known at the Palace of Justice for his imposing white neckcloths ; and he reads the *Patrie*. Other current literature is familiar to him chiefly from its frequent appearances at the criminal bar in the persons of journalists and pamphleteers ; and barristers affectionately call him " Old Maximum," because of his preference for heavy penalties to light ones.

But at Le Tréport you get M. de St. Codefiche entering freely, not to say hilariously, into the spirit of all the amusements provided. He has brought with him his wife, and Mademoiselle de St. Codefiche, who will marry a public prosecutor by-and-by, and young de St. Codefiche, who lately carried off a grand prize at the Concours-Général, and is a promising youth, who will do wonders in a year or two as deputy-prosecutor in some provincial court. M. Cocasse, who likes his joke, has been telling Old Maximum that at the next Revolution the Communists or Anarchists, having found fire of no avail, will try the cold-water cure to heal social abuses, and will fling all the public men of note into the Seine. He advises M. le Président to learn swimming, and that is why Old Maximum, who always thinks it well to be on the safe side, may be seen striding over the shingle every morning at eleven. He holds his son by the hand during these excursions, having impressed upon him the necessity of swimming too ; and before stepping into the water both the learned Codefiches turn to wave their hands blandly, as if they feared nothing, to Madame and Mademoiselle de St. Codefiche, who are working tapestry on the Casino terrace.

Nevertheless, the other day Old Maximum had an adventure which still makes his blood curdle. He had taken his fifth swimming lesson, and was getting on so knowingly that M. Cocasse caused him to be girt with a cork-belt, and led him out of his depth for about a quarter of a mile to the boat rocking at anchor with a sailor in it to rescue the cramped. Old Maximum counted on climbing into the boat when he had floundered over his quarter

of a mile ; but lo ! on arriving there Madame de Lestincelle was seen sitting in the bows.

She was dressed in the approved fashion—in a blue tunic, white braided, knickerbockers, an oil-skin cap, and above it all a glazed sailor's hat ; and she was perched right on the boat's side with her feet dangling into the water. Now, Old Maximum was thoroughly exhausted and breathless, but, however much inured he might be to national ways, he could not bring himself to climb into the boat lightly attired as he was, and Madame de Lestincelle, perceiving his embarrassment, took mocking advantage of it and playfully kicked a gallon of water into his eyes :

“ So I've caught you at my mercy, Monsieur le Président ! ” she exclaimed pitilessly. “ Now, see ; my husband is going to have a lawsuit next term about some trespass, and unless you promise to use your influence for us I shall let you drown.”

“ My dear lady ! ” gasped M. de St. Codefiche, treading water with despair, for he felt that if he remained motionless the weight of his head would make him spin upside down like a float ; but Madame de Lestincelle sternly repeated : “ Will you do as you are told—yes or no ? ”

“ I—I—can't t—tamper with m—my conscience, d—dear madam ! ” protested Old Maximum, truly fearing that she was in earnest.

“ Well, then, *mon pauvre Président*, you have tied a millstone round your neck,” retorted she, and so saying took a header off the boat's side and swam away, splashing more spray into the judge's face as she passed him. Old Maximum was lifted into the boat by the shoulders and comforted with a tarpaulin, but he felt only half sure that an attempt had not been made to test his incorruptibility.

Old Maximum and M. Cocasse are very good friends, however, and the time to see them in the flow of intimacy is at dinner, when they have been counteracting the briny sea air with a little St. Péray, a wine of which M. de St. Codefiche knew nought till the author called for it, and which puzzled him at first by flying

straight to his head like laughing gas. Now one night, having drunk sufficient of this heady fluid—the champagne of the South—Old Maximum was merry, and let himself be led away to the Casino, where he was moved to recount a story. Let it be noted that everything tended to promote conversation. The dancing-room was ablaze with gas, the orchestra was jingling away, and in the maze of waltzes Mademoiselle de St. Codefiche could be seen whirling bashfully with the most unimpeachable of public prosecutors, with black whiskers and a double eyeglass.

“Well,” began Old Maximum, drawing his silver snuff-box and offering M. Cocasse a pinch, “well, such as you see me, I was young once, and there was a time when I was no more than six-and-twenty years old.”

“I always guessed as much,” replied the author with conviction.

“Yes, and it was at six-and-twenty I was appointed Judicial Assessor of First Instance in the town of Touserétins,” continued Old Maximum. “It was a queer little town with streets all running about in short zigzags, as if they were afraid of the big court-house that stood frowning in the middle of the market-place; but I thought a good deal of it then, and especially of the court-house. I was also very proud of my ermine lappets and of the silver lace round my velvet cap; indeed, I may tell you in confidence that I used to pose before my looking-glass to see whether I wore my robes with proper stateliness. It was in the evening, after a day’s work on the bench, that I used to do this, and one night I was so engaged—ah! how well I remember that night!—when my servant brought me a card with the name ‘Baroness de Susurre,’ and immediately there walked in a lady in great agitation and with her veil drawn.”

“Aha!” ejaculated irreverent M. Cocasse, nudging the presiding judge with his elbow.

“Yes, I don’t deny she was very pretty,” sighed Old Maximum mildly, as if the vision were still before him; “she was dressed in brown satin, and her comely face peered at me from the depths of a puce-coloured bonnet shaped like a bell; but those

were the fashions of the time, and seemed to me very grand. Judge what I felt when this seductive creature clasped her hands as if she were going to throw herself at my feet, and said, 'Sir, I come to you as a suppliant. To-morrow you are going to try Monsieur Tourtoural, the journalist, for having written an article against the Government; but he is not guilty. It is I who wrote the article!' Now at that period Louis Philippe was on the throne, and I was a staunch Orleanist."

"Heigh! I thought you were a Bonapartist?" interrupted arch M. Cocasse.

"H'm, I became that later," coughed M. de St. Codefiche, taking another pinch of snuff. "At that period Monsieur Guizot was Premier, and there can be no doubt that Monsieur Tourtoural's atrocious article deserved a year's imprisonment, and would have got it; but what could I say when Madame de Susurre exclaimed: 'It is surely not just to send one person to prison for what another has done! If you sentence Monsieur Tourtoural, I shall speak out before the whole public and confess my guilt, so that you will be obliged to send me to gaol, and perhaps that will satisfy you!' My friend, I stood dumbfounded; to think I could be satisfied at sending a fair young creature like that to the prison-house was a cruel imputation on my manliness, and evinced also strange blindness as to the emotion I was suffering. To give myself a countenance, I stammered: 'But, madam, you have cause to be displeased with Government, since you write such bitter articles against it?' 'No,' said she, holding up her muff to her mouth and looking at me rather strangely over it, 'no, I wrote the article because—because a lonely woman must do some thing. You see, I am quite lonely. I am a widow and have a hundred thousand francs a year.'"

There was a pause, during which Old Maximum's features became pathetic. "My friend, note the subtle artifice of that young person's avowal. It was a hint that I could help dispel her loneliness, and be a suitor for her hundred thousand francs. I was very youthful, as I have told you, and had my own way to

carve in life ; a rich wife would have been the making of me ; and a wife at once rich and handsome—Well, let that pass. I took the bait ; I made her a promise, and she left me with a smile, to spend the most torturing night I had ever passed. Remember, press trials took place before three judges without a jury, so I had my two colleagues, or at least one of them, to win over.

“It was not my fellow assessor, though, whom I dreaded,” continued the judge : “Pionceau was his name : he was fat and pliable ; he had a knack of cloaking his face in the sleeves of his gown, as though he were profoundly meditating the arguments of counsel, and all the while he would be as sound asleep as a post. But Pionceau had a passion for collecting stag-beetles, and I could do anything I pleased with him by the timely present of an authentic *Lucanus cervus*. So I bought and despatched him one (with a friendly note) before going to bed ; but this done I tossed sleeplessly and with all my nerves unstrung from thinking of our President—a tall, austere man, who looked cut out of jagged flint, and laid down the law in rasping tones like a man who knew his two codes by heart. He was indeed a judge who could not have been diverted from the track of duty by father, mother, or child.”

Old Maximun paused again : “Believe me, monsieur, when I went into Court on the morrow I trembled like a schoolboy. The proofs of the journalist’s guilt were overwhelming, and far from extenuating his offence, the man revelled in it—jeered at us, taunted us ; in fact, his case was so clear that when we judges retired to consider, the President did not even consult Pionceau and me, but sat down at once to draw up the sentence. Then it was that I had to muster up all my courage and say I voted for an acquittal. I can still see the President give an incredulous start, shading his eyes with his hands to see whether it were really I who had spoken—I, his disciple, mind you.

“Perhaps if he had been less stern I might have relented, but it seemed to me that he was making light of me. Vanity came

to my aid, as well as the thought of Madame de Susurre, and I spoke impulsively for ten minutes in support of my views. When I had poured out my disingenuous sophisms the President turned without a word to Pionceau, but Pionceau remained true to me because of the stag-beetle. Then the President pushed back his papers and rose, pale and shocked; he was outvoted, and had nothing to say, but from that day he was never again the same man. Either he came to distrust his own power of persuasion or our integrity; anyhow, his manner was altered; I lost his private friendship, and soon afterwards he resigned. As to our finding in the Tourtoural case, he refused to deliver it, so it was I who on our return into Court pronounced the acquittal—an acquittal which rang through all France, for it looked as if the judicial bench intended to defy the Ministry. Ah, me! what a day!”

“Well, it was bravely done!” ejaculated M. Cocasse, who is always pleased when authorities are defied; “and now I suppose I may congratulate you—Madame de Susurre has become Madame de St. Codefiche?”

A silence ensued, and then Old Maximum answered resignedly, “Madame de Susurre married Monsieur Tourtoural, the journalist.”

“That was sad,” laughed M. Cocasse.

“It was a disappointment,” concurred M. de St. Codefiche; “but she had made sport of me from the first. She had never written the article, and only tried her wiles upon me because I was young and inexperienced; and yet,” added Old Maximum with a fugitive smile, “the affair was not wholly unprofitable to me, for when the next Revolution occurred Monsieur Tourtoural became somebody and had me promoted; and after Sedan, when he became somebody for the second time, he appointed me chief justice.”

“And that is why you have turned Republican?” inquired M. Cocasse.

“Republican? That is scarcely the term; now-a-days, I am for upholding the constituted authorities,” replied M., le Président de St. Codefiche prudently.

CHAPTER XXXII.

"LES CHUTES DE MADAME VIRGINIE."

As we predicted, the new comedy written *en collaboration* by M. Victor Cocasse and the poet Poupette has proved a great success, and the doors of the Théâtre des Folies Parisiennes are being besieged every evening by crowds anxious to witness a play in which sprightliness of dialogue and neatness of construction enhance the attractions of a plot of the profoundest immorality. The original idea of this plot was undoubtedly M. Poupette's, and the dialogue is his also, albeit duly trimmed by M. Cocasse. However, the construction and immorality are entirely due to the latter gifted gentleman, who naturally claims all the credit of the success; nor will anyone dispute his title on hearing what labour he went through before bringing the new comedy to the footlights amid the enthusiasm of the "most artistic public in Europe."

On arriving from the seaside with his manuscript and his partner, the first thing to do was to appoint a day for reading *Les Chutes* to the company of the "Folies;" and M. Cocasse, having done this, proceeded to inform the manager that he would entrust the part of Madame Virginie to none but Mademoiselle Fauvette, of the "Fantaisies," whom he begged the manager to engage forthwith at a salary of five thousand francs a month, with fifty francs *de feux*—that is £2 extra for each performance. It was then that M. Poupette had occasion to admire the combative ardour of his friend, and to admit that "knowledge of the stage" is truly a science apart. The engagement of Mademoiselle Fauvette instantly secured to M. Cocasse the undying enmity of

Mademoiselle Pinson, till then leading actress of the "Folies," the wrath of three critics who befriended that lady, and the sulky protests of M. Triuquelin, the stage-manager.

When the pair of authors entered the green-room for the reading—M. Cocasse escorting Mademoiselle Fauvette on his arm—Mademoiselle Pinson lifted a double eyeglass to stare hard and disdainfully at her rival, and M. Poupette felt abashed; but he was seized with horror when his partner, who looks like a retired gendarme, shouted brutally to the actress, "I say, Miss, if you don't mean to behave yourself, you know where the door lies."

Mademoiselle Pinson changed the direction of her glasses, but turned them on M. Poupette, who has ever been keenly susceptible to the glance of feminine eyes; perceiving which, Mademoiselle Pinson lost no time in beckoning him to her side after the reading, and whimpered coaxingly, "What have I done that you two should oust me from the part of Madame Virginie? It's just suited to my style; and you'll see that that little Fauvette, who is as lean and dry as a twig, won't be able to cry at the pathetic bits, whereas I can always turn on a shower of real tears whenever they're wanted."

M. Poupette, much impressed, went to confide these remonstrances to his partner, but M. Cocasse growled, "Look here, Poupette, if you are going to let those fluffly-haired little minxes get the weather side of you, you had better run back to Le Tréport and stay there till I send for you!"

"I meant no harm," stammered M. Poupette, "but to tell you the truth, I don't quite understand your ways: for instance, you're horribly gruff with Mamuzot, the manager, who has been most civil to us."

"Gruff!" echoed M. Cocasse, and he cracked his finger joints; "may I ask you, Poupette, whether you have ever seen a manager lift his foot to help you down his staircase?"

"No," confessed the poet.

"No, you haven't, because I've saved you all that by making

you start on the stage under my wing," grinned M. Cocasse ; " but I—I, the gruff churl—have gone through all the apprenticeship of play-writing. I have known what it is to leave comedies at a stage-door when I was famishing, and to give my last five-franc piece to the doorkeeper so that my manuscript might really reach the manager. I have been flouted by tenth-rate actors, laughed at by actresses for having a patch on my coat, and turned out of the slips by a scene-shifter for having remonstrated with a lessee who had kept a piece of mine for six months without reading it. The piece was a precious bad one, but that makes no difference, and I made a vow that if I ever could turn the tables I would make all these stage folk feel what the weight of my heel was."

" Well, I sympathize with you," said the amiable poet, " but as a question of common decency, you know, wouldn't you —— "

" It's not a question of decency but of business," interrupted M. Cocasse, and that he was a thorough business man was soon proved in the negotiation for terms, which more resembled the wrangling of two fish-fags about the price of a red herring than the conference of a couple of gentlemen upon a literary work.

" Our terms are a premium of five thousand francs on the first night and ten thousand francs on the hundredth, with twelve per cent. on each night's gross receipts," said M. Cocasse, in the managerial study.

" Ten per cent. and no premiums ? " yelled the manager ; " you want to ruin me."

" It won't be the first time, so you're used to it," laughed M. Cocasse with pleasant familiarity. Now, is it yes or no ? " Whereat the manager plaintively gave in, and the agreement was drawn up by a notary the same day.

M. Poupette blushed for this scene of haggling, and he could not help asking his partner what figures they should both cut if the play failed after all this bombast. " It struck me, do you know, that the actors and actresses remained very chilly while you were reading ? "

"That's the best sign possible," responded M. Cocasse. "It's an old tradition among dramatists that whenever the players clap their hands at a reading the piece will fall flat; and the reason is obvious, for those people are only concerned to see whether their own parts overshadow those of the others. Whenever an actress runs to thank me with both hands extended, I know the jade's part is too long, and I set the scissors to work."

"You are certainly a great man," smiled the poet.

"So I am," answered M. Cocasse quietly, "and now for the censors."

To such a gentleman as M. Cocasse the censors are, of course, all known by their pet Christian names. One of them is fondly called "Old Dog," owing to his keen scent in detecting excitable matter, though when authors happen to be in a rage with him they dub him after another domestic animal renowned for unearthing truffles. Instead of despatching *Les Chutes de Madame Virginie* to the censor's office, M. Cocasse called personally on Old Dog, and requested him to read the work, while he—Cocasse—smoked a cigar by the fireside.

Old Dog was willing, but before he had got half-way through the first scene he protested: "I say, this is too bad. I warned you last time we couldn't have any more of this. The Government insists on our being moral."

"What are we to put into a play then?" inquired M. Cocasse, in disgust. "You won't let us touch politics."

"No," said Old Dog.

"Nor religion, nor the army, nor anything else," proceeded M. Cocasse.

"No, you mustn't touch anything," agreed the censor, "but we must cut out these bits which are really too—too—by the way, who's your *première*?"

"Fauvette, an impassioned little baggage, great at hysterics and foot-stamping. You may cut out what you please, but I warn you she'll underline the remainder so as to imply every syllable you suppress."

When Old Dog heard this he laid down his red pencil as if excisions were indeed superfluous. After all, the play, though immoral, was not dangerous to society, as are those works which talk of liberty or advocate judicial reforms to the convulsing of the pit and gallery; so Old Dog, whose functions had given him an eye for good work, contented himself with examining the play and dropping hints from a purely artistic point of view.

These hints M. Cocasse gratefully accepted, and, on quitting the censor, went instantly to a newspaper office to announce that the censorship had prohibited his play because of its crude subject. For the next eight days the theatrical reporters entertained their readers with the dispute which was supposed to be carried on between the authors and the examiners, and M. Poupette at first ran to his partner in consternation, thinking all this must be true; but M. Cocasse reassured him by explaining that he had only adopted a well-known device for whetting the appetite of the Parisians.

"That reminds me though," added he, "that you must dock that long speech in the scene where the husband rushes in after he has discovered everything. It's twice too long—even the censor thinks so."

Now this too long speech naturally happened to be the very portion of his work of which the poet was most proud. He had put into the mouth of the husband all that this unfortunate being would be likely to say under the circumstances indicated, and very pathetically did he plead that such a gush of fine sentiments might not be curtailed, but M. Cocasse was inexorable.

"The dramatist's emblem is the pruning-hook," said he. "Beaumarchais gave Figaro a rôle 1,450 lines long; but that was ninety years ago, and nowadays we want action. In repartee dialogue the players should nag at each other in sentences a line long. When one of them is over-excited five lines are enough, if a brilliant answer is to follow. In declamation, limit yourself to twenty lines."

"Why not measure out literature at once with a decimètre rule?" inquired the poet, scandalized.

"If you did, you would be less likely to go wrong," replied M. Cocasse, breezily, and thereupon the husband's speech was cut in two.

But M. Poupette's trials were by no means over, for the next day there rustled into his apartments Mademoiselle Dindonnette, who was to play one of the secondary parts, and who supplicated with most pretty gestures to have that part lengthened by at least fifty lines.

"You shall distribute the additions as you like between the five acts," said she, sweetly; "but you see, it's not fair to make me sit on the stage for half an hour in a handsome dress without saying anything—is it now?"

"It isn't," declared M. Poupette; and he chivalrously promised that the fifty lines required should be forthcoming on the morrow, and tally in every point with the handsome dress.

But when M. Cocasse heard of this he lost his temper: "You shan't attend the rehearsals, Poupette—you're too susceptible. On the evening of the hundredth we'll give a supper and dance for the actresses as usual, and you'll see then that I can be as gallant as the best of them; but in business-hours, bar of ifon is the word. And note that my manner is nothing to Sardou's; he raves at the actresses till they would pull his hair if they dared. Give me those fifty lines to light my cigar with, please."

M. Poupette assuredly thought when he saw himself treated in this way that his bright prose was being made far too light of, and that a literary disaster would be the result. Even now, when *Les Chutes de Madame Virginie* is an established success, it is not so sure that the poet relishes hearing the critics declare that the merit of the work lies wholly in the construction, and that the dialogue is beneath contempt. But there are great consolations. M. Poupette finds himself an applauded author, pledged by treaty to write two more comedies in the course of

next year, with his business-like *collaborateur* ; and it is soothing to him to know that the manager of the “Folies” pays into his account at the Dramatic Agency six per cent. on the gross receipts of the theatre, and that he does this punctually once a week, being bound thereto by the statutes of that admirable trade union “La Société des Auteurs et Compositeurs Dramatiques.”

CHAPTER XXXIII.

BUBBLE REPUTATIONS.

IN all careers there is a narrow line beyond which lie all the good things that compose success. Many cross it without effort ; the greater number, notwithstanding efforts more or less desperate, never step over it at all. In the breasts of these springs up a gnawing envy for those who have been luckier than they ; and yet, to speak fairly, envy is not directed against the geniuses who have sped over the line flying, but against that heavier tribe who have got over the line no one exactly knows how—by chance, charlatanry, or the pushing of influential connections. These are the men of bubble reputations, and every profession has its stock of them.

One afternoon, at the hour when the Bourse closes, there came down the steps a plump man with the comfortable air of having made money. Passing the gates, he ran against another plump man, whom he recognised with emotion as an old schoolfellow. The two shook hands and held each other at arm's length, the better to admire the ravages which time had wrought on their respective features.

"Dear me, what a time it is since we have met !" exclaimed the Bourse-man. "You know I have been a stockbroker at Marseilles, and have just come to set up in Paris. But I've not lost sight of you since you've become a popular author. I buy all your books, and my wife reads 'em."

"Thanks ; I have made my little way in the world," answers the author with modest complacency ; and, walking towards a café together, the pair fell to talking about this one and that one

of their common friends, till the very natural wish arose in them to collect as many of these old friends as were available and have a fraternal banquet.

By the unanimous consent of both it was resolved to exclude friends who had not been successful in life, lest these should avail themselves of the festive occasion to borrow money; but the author, who was a journalist as well and knew everybody's whereabouts, thought he could collect a very decent gathering of old comrades, and notably a vicar-general who was in a fair way of becoming a bishop. "Only, if we are to have a priest," said he, "we must dine at an hotel—say the 'Grand.'"

This was agreed to. The Bourse-man left the author *carte blanche*, and a few nights later a most respectable and convivial party of six, comprising the Bourse-man and the author, the vicar-general, a brigade-general, a fashionable doctor, and a prefect, assembled at the Grand Hôtel, over a menu which left nothing to be desired.

The dinner was excellent, but the party were a little stiff at first from each reflecting how ridiculously fat and aged the other five had grown. By-and-by, however, the flow of rare wines aiding, they gradually relaxed into anecdotes and laughter; then, they addressed one another by their christian names; then by forgotten nicknames, till at last, when dessert was on the table and the waiters had retired, the Bourse-man, fired by a manly yearning to unbosom himself, exclaimed, "I say, why shouldn't we each relate our histories? It will be queer enough to hear how we came to climb to our present height, each of us starting from so low." Ananias, you are used to story-telling, supposing you begin?"

Ananias was the author, who straightway opined that the clergy took precedence, and called upon Basile, the old sobriquet of the vicar-general.

The priest gave a malicious smile: "In confessing, the great difficulty is how to begin; I know it from my experience. But I will propose a middle term: Supposing we each relate what we

know of one another's history. I will begin with Ananias, about whom I know more than he thinks."

The author winced: "You will let me say afterwards all I know about you, Basile?"

"Certainly," responded the vicar-general sweetly, and he began:

"Ananias when at school was a sad dog, who had a knack for telling tales about his playfellows. In due time he got employed in a notary's office, and there, having picked up some secrets about big people, communicated them to the editor of a small sheet which lived on scandal, and this editor employed him as paid lampooner on the strength of them. A duel brought Ananias into notoriety, and six months' imprisonment for exhibiting a skeleton that hung in some unpopular Minister's family cupboard made a hero of him. No sooner out of prison, our friend fell foul of an Academician to whom he owed a grudge for having refused to patronise him in his early youth; and this Academician, seeing Ananias become powerful, took the wise course of throwing him a sop. He appointed him his private secretary and *collaborateur* for an historical work, and in this capacity Ananias fell in with a piece of luck which influenced the whole of his career.

"Ferreting among his master's papers one day, he stumbled upon a novel which the latter had written when he was not yet in the Academy. Unfortunately, the subject was a hazardous one, and the Academician, having been appointed to a Government post at the time when he thought of publishing it, had shelved it for fear it should compromise him. There it lay unknown to anybody but the author, who shortly before his death destroyed it; but Ananias there had taken a copy, and as soon as his employer was dead published it as a work of his own—with what startling success you all of you know, for the book was simply a master-work. Note that Ananias has published several books since that day, and has cleared large sums of money by them, but they have all been trash, and as an author our friend's reputation is based wholly on that first work."

During this little disclosure the author had been observed to kick the whins of his reverence under the table, but, as the priest paid no heed, he feigned to laugh the matter off.

"That's a capital story, my good Basile," said he, "but it happens to be untrue. I'll tell you what's true, though—a tale of how a young and unctuous priest killed a benefactor by his ingratitude. This young priest had been adopted by an old bishop, who loved him as the apple of his eye, and had made him his chaplain. One day at election time the bishop was to have preached a sermon in the cathedral in favour of the Legitimist candidate, but, falling ill on the day previous, he entrusted his sermon to the chaplain to preach in his stead. The cathedral was crowded, for it was generally known that the bishop would speak out his mind; and even the Emperor's prefect had come to hear himself abused. The chaplain mounted the pulpit; but what did he do? Face to face with the vast concourse of people, he saw that the time had come for making himself a name, and instead of preaching the bishop's sermon, he thundered out a violent philippic against the Legitimists and against all Oppositionists generally; at the same time lauding the Emperor's Government to the skies. When the bishop heard of this he went straight out of life as if he had been shot; but the Imperial Government kept its eye on the chaplain, gave him a rich benefice, then a vicar-generalship, and there you see him."

The priest cracked a silbert without turning a hair: "That story is as fantastic as the other," remarked he; "it seems we are all romancing to-night."

"Are we though!" exclaimed the general, laughing. "If that story be true, Basile, you have an excellent precedent for what you did in the case of Richelieu, who let his benefactor Concini go to the scaffold. But, to tell the truth, this reminds me of the way in which I myself got my proper start in life. I, too, had a benefactor—my colonel—and there was an election mixed up in my case.

"It was at St. Etienne, and, the mob having turned up in force

one night to hoot under some official's windows, a company of ours was called out to disperse them. The colonel entrusted the command to me; but in doing so explained how difficult was his position. If we shed blood there would be an outcry; if we let the rioters continue their freaks, Government would be indignant at our weakness—he relied on my tact to hold the balance even. I marched off with my men, and as soon as we reached the scene of the row ordered aloud to load with ball cartridge. This was down in the programme, for it was necessary to terrify the rioters; but it chanced I had lunched well that morning, and when I saw that the beggars wouldn't run, despite the loading and the bugle calls, I lost patience and commanded to fire right into the thick of them. My men discharged ten rounds, and I never knew what carnage was till that moment: when the smoke cleared we found a couple of hundred dead and wounded strewn about. However, the square was emptied and the rioters didn't hoot any more either that year or for many years after.

“My poor colonel was cashiered, for the responsibility lay with him, and the newspapers raised such a clamour that Government was forced to make an example. As for me, who pleaded that I had misunderstood my orders, I was reprimanded then—and promoted soon after; and I had occasion to observe that whenever some service was required which called for more nerve than parley I was the man told off for it. Thus at the time of the Commune I was a colonel, and they sent me to deal with a quarter of Belleville—it was there I earned my generalship.”

The fashionable doctor had been laughing at these recitals till the tears ran out of his eyes. “My own story can be briefly related, for it is as uneventful as it is mysterious,” he began with an involuntary lowering of the voice. “I was a struggling practitioner, living on a patient a week, when one night I was startled up to attend a great lady in a case highly delicate and demanding the utmost discretion. ‘Keep my secret,’ said she, ‘and you will not repent it.’ I did keep her secret, and I suppose it was owing to her agency persistently and privately exerted on

my behalf in society that I came to have the reputation for silence and trustworthiness which I enjoy to this day. All I know is, that from that lucky night in question patients streamed to my house at all hours, and——”

“What was the secret?” interrupted the author.

“Ah! I have forgotten it,” replied the doctor demurely.

Hereat the Bourse-man was disgusted.

“Come, come, what is the use of being reticent?” cried he, in a voice quivering from just a thimbleful too much claret. “We’re all among friends here, and to prove my own reliance on the honour of everybody all round, I’ll just show you on what slender threads characters for honesty sometimes hang.

“I was an ill-paid cashier in a bank at Strasburg. My master was a hard, close-fisted man, with little enterprise in him; and, having myself a great taste for speculation, I could not help reflecting how much better I should do than he if I had a small capital to start with. One Saturday night my musings proved too much for me. There was a hundred thousand francs in the strong-box, and defalcations could not be missed till the Monday. I took the whole sum, and levanted over the bridge of Kehl, intending to go by way of Baden to Rotterdam, and thence to America. But at Baden I had to wait some hours for the train, so to while away the time and drive away the black thoughts that were pursuing me I entered the Kursaal. They were playing roulette. I had never gambled in my life, but staked a napoleon on the red, which won. I ventured a second, it won again; in brief, the red passed twelve times, I backing it for my accumulated winnings till I reached the maximum, after which every turn of the red added six thousand francs to my pile. At the thirteenth turn when black appeared I lost six thousand francs, and, nettled at this, set to work in earnest and played with steady luck, till at the end of a couple of hours a great hurrah arose, and I found I had broken the bank, I netting one hundred and seventy thousand francs. It was no use starting for America then. On the Monday I was back at my desk in Strasburg, and, some weeks later, quietly re-

signed, to the profound regret of my master.° I went to Marseilles and traded in stocks, and am now a millionaire.” °°

This beautiful story was listened to with interest by all present save the prefect, who had fallen asleep. He was a sleek placid man, and on awaking smiled innocently as a child.

“I beg pardon,” said he, rubbing his eyes, “I suppose you want my story, but really I have none to tell.”

The vicar-general smiled : “There is a reception at the archbishopric to-night, and I am afraid I must be off.”

The rest of the company rose smiling, too, and the prefect most of all without knowing why. It was eleven o'clock, and the six old schoolfellows separated full of esteem for one another, having spent a merry evening.

M. TARTINE'S EXPERIENCES.

I.

THE "*FROMAGE*" NEWSPAPER.

I.—CAPITAL.

THAT brilliant writer on the *Cigare*, M. Timoléon Tartine, contends that Pegasus should never be put in harness, which is another way of saying that a brain such as his own should be left free to work without the curb of editorial supervision. Accordingly, M. Tartine means to found a new paper. Now there are one-and-thirty daily papers in Paris, and the want of a thirty-second has not yet been generally felt. But never mind that. The man who has not talent enough to invent a necessity, and then supply it, is unworthy to rank above the porcupine. Besides which, so long as there are men with more money than brains, why should not a man with more brains than money wear polished boots with the best of them?

It is a fact that no man in Paris need despair so long as there is a select knot who want 10 per cent. for their money and look upon literature as a safer investment than railway stock or patent self-acting toothpicks. The only point is to select your capitalist with caution—not to be beguiled by the simple looks of that fat man with the big watch-chain and the knotty fingers, nor to fancy that because this other one has gooseberry eyes he cannot see very far into his own interests. How many colleagues has not M. Tartine known—brilliant butterflies with the bright gold-

dust of new-won fame on their wings—who thought they could fly alone, and came torn and faded out of the brambles of prickly bushes which they had mistaken for rose-trees.

They would call upon him—Tartine—with their speckless yellow gloves on, and say, laughing with pure joy, “Tartine, I am going to start a paper—something new and witty. I have found a capitalist, the best-natured booby in the world—a very milch-cow in trousers. We are going to worship each other and make our fortunes.”

Then for a month or so it would be a daily paean, the milch-cow and the butterfly loving each other like brothers, and putting their coins and wits in common as brothers and sisters ought to do. Then one foggy day there would be a hitch; then the butterfly would discover that the milch-cow had horns; next a collapse. Some evening M. Tartine would hear his erst sparkling but now seedy friend make fiery excuses at the café for the Communalists who hanged up capitalists by the heels, and wish such an arrangement were practicable now-a-days. Yes, yes; M. Tartine has had experience that way, and he is not going to be caught in the toils himself. He knows of a capitalist who is unlike all the others, and this is the man he will honour with his patronage. So he puts on his best coat to visit the paragon.

A stuccoed villa in the suburbs—one of a thousand such, where retired trade wheezes away its declining years amid new furniture and faulty drainage. A garden in front, big as a table-cloth; a door with a fluted porch, and a maid-of-all-work, who answers the bell with the fumes of dinner on her clothes and the heat of the same on her countenance; a card tendered and accepted—these are the ordeals through which M. Tartine passes into the drawing-room of M. Veaudor, who sits musing with emotion over the cheeses he sold for forty years and shall never sell again.

A small lean man is M. Veaudor with no hair, but plenty of conversation; and M. Tartine respects him, for he thinks the candour of your fat and silent men has been over-rated, they

being as a fact more dangerous customers than your lean man who lets out in talk all the perilous ideas that may be in him. M. Veaudor has nothing to do all day but look at Madame Veaudor, and at the sight of a stranger he turns on the taps of his dammed-up eloquence, letting his interlocutor get in a stray word here and there if Providence helps him. He regrets his cheeses, his counter, his white apron, and does not conceal it. M. Tartine sends him an order for the play now and then, and he likes M. Tartine. Has M. Tartine dined? No. Then he shall dine.

"Euphémie, we have a friend to dinner; go and announce to madame that Monsieur Tartine is here. And, Monsieur Tartine, how does Paris look? I sigh after the macadam, which is more refreshing to the sight and drier to the feet than the verdure of the fields. I was stung by a gnat yesterday; the bullets of Parisian revolutionists only broke my shop windows. Take the trouble of sitting down. Roast veal with stuffing for dinner and some of that St. Emilion, which I keep in the loft, because half the cellar fell in the other day. I had a cellar eight mètres long in Paris, and it never fell in; but then in the country they are three centuries behindhand. To live here is like going back to the dark ages before gruyère cheese was invented. I observe you were going to say something."

"Only this," smirks M. Tartine; "that a man of your talent and enterprise should decidedly live in Paris, with a house in the Champs Elysées, a carriage, and six horses."

"Pooh, talent!" interrupts M. Veaudor, modestly. "I began with one cheese and ended with half a million—I mean francs. I suppose there's not many a man either who could judge a cheese as I can. I take a knife and cut right into the middle. Mind you, the secret lies there—good middle, good cheese. Then I wrote a pamphlet on cheeses, advocating their introduction into the army instead of those eternal messes of beef. The Minister of War might have made something of the suggestion if Governments were not all obtuse, and I showed the Finance Minister

how he might have balanced his budget by increasing the duty on foreign cheeses. Patriotism is the fund of my nature, Monsieur Tartine. 'Why,' I wrote, 'when France glories in her cheeses of Roquefort, Brie, and Bondon should she borrow the Stiltons and Chesters of England?' If I could find a helper and books of reference, I would write a history of the French cheese, proving its superiority over the cheeses of the foreigner, and treating of its softening influence on the manners of our rural populations——"

"Ah!" breaks out M. Tartine, enthusiastically, "I knew you were a man of letters; let us found a newspaper together."

At this juncture enter Madame Veaudor, twenty years younger than her lord, twice his size, cased in rustling *noir* silk, and with hair enough for both of them—so much so, indeed, that one might suppose M. Veaudor had gallantly sacrificed all his own locks to stuff his lady's chignon. Ten minutes to courtesies, and then, dinner supervening, the newspaper question is shelved. But not for long, for by the time the cloth is removed, the future historian of cheese, his wife, and M. Tartine have all three a sparkle in the eye, and have raised their voices by an octave. Four bottles of claret have contributed to this result, but not more so than the eloquence of M. Tartine; for who ever opened as he did such a dazzling vista of possibilities to the eyes of retired and wearied tradesfolk?

Already does M. Veaudor behold himself installed as the venerated proprietor of an influential daily paper in the best stage-box of a leg-piece theatre, the said box having cost him nothing. He hears the flattering murmurs of the crowd, he marks envy blackening the brow of Moutonneau, his best friend, who is sitting in the pit: he has the run of the Palais Bourbon lobbies; two piebald horses drag him through the streets; he says "*tu*" to Dumas, hobnobs with Magnard, patronises John Lemoinne, offers bouquets to Mademoiselle Pierson, wears a new brown wig, and sees his *Histoire du Fromage Français, depuis les Temps les plus reculés* appear as a daily and eagerly-devoured serial

in his newspaper ! And by-and-by when the paper has succeeded by judiciously opposing Government, why should not he, Veaudor, make terms with the Ministry and receive the Legion of Honour ? Who knows but after that he might manage to become a deputy ?

"For the cheese interest has no representative in the Legislature," remarks M. Tartine, adroitly.

"And you have such a genius for politics," chimes in Madame Veaudor, whose own brain is all afire from thinking how she shall eclipse her dear friend Madame Moutonneau.

"My dear," says M. Veaudor, already speaking with gravity which befits a historian and a statesman, "when the paper is founded you shall have a box at the opera, a cashmere shawl, and a footman with powder in his hair."

"We shall make two hundred thousand francs a year and apiece by it," continues M. Tartine ; "all we need now is three hundred thousand francs to start with."

Fifteen thousand louis d'or ! It takes another visit to the loft in search of more wine to make this monstrous sum go down ; but vanity, the sense of present boredom, and the certainty of future gains—for M. Tartine will stake his life on their certainty—eventually carry it. M. Tartine shall be editor ; M. Veaudor shall sell his shares in the Kamschatka railway ; there shall be a deed of partnership ; and the new journal shall be called *Le Fromage : Organe du Commerce et de la Régénération Nationale*.

"You have an inborn genius for literature, as you have for politics," exclaims M. Tartine, as his new partner propounds that title.

"Take another glass of wine, my dear Monsieur Tartine, or rather my dear Timoléon," responds M. Veaudor.

"We will have the advertisements out next week, my dear Veaudor."

"We will, dear Timoléon, for I will sell out the first thing tomorrow."

"Allow me to have the honour of embracing you," ejaculates M. Tartine.

"Come to my arms," shouts M. Veaudor, and, French fashion, they kiss each other tenderly.

That night M. Veaudor dreams that he is proprietor of the first paper in Europe, and that M. Tartine is a sort of confidential valet to him; simultaneously M. Tartine dreams that he is the editor of the grandest paper in the universe, and that M. Veaudor is his obedient servant.

II.—LABOUR.

LET us take it that three months have passed since that evening when claret and M. Tartine prevailed upon M. Veaudor to part with 300,000 francs of his money and found a newspaper. These three months have been not uneventful. Paris has been regaled with cream-coloured posters, heralding *Le Fromage : Organe du Commerce et de la Régénération Nationale*; the kiosk company has been bargained with; brother editors have kindly announced that a new journal, under the able leadership of our *spirituel confrère*, M. Timoléon Tartine, was about to start on its career to fame; last, M. Tartine has repaired to the Bureau de la Presse, at the rear of the Hôtel Beauvan, and, in virtue of the privilege which present laws confer on all Frenchmen, has signified his intention of bringing out this new journal, at the same time duly registering its title.

And now the three great rival advertisement agencies—*Fermes d'annonces*—swoop down on M. Tartine with offers for taking the fourth page of *Le Fromage* entirely under their charge. Few struggling newspaper proprietors can resist the inducement to farm out their advertisement columns in this way—indeed, there are but a couple of journals in Paris whose own advertisement pages belong to them. But M. Tartine will mortgage his anticipated profits to no man, and proclaims this in a tone

that inspires the agents with the highest respect for the coming *Fromage*. •

The next thing to do is to recruit the staff; and who that saw the sight can ever forget M. Tartine as he appeared in the discharge of this delicate function? Besieged by the thousand-and-one unappreciated geniuses who prowl about Paris in search of an editor; prayed to by grosses of the same sort writing from the provinces; arrested by the coat-tails under the porches of theatres, on the threshold of restaurants, and pursued into his very dressing-room by former colleagues and dear friends most disinterestedly anxious to assist him in his new undertaking, what tact it required to distribute treacle among this host and ruffle the feelings of no man! It speaks well for M. Tartine that he succeeded in this without making himself more than a few hundred or so implacable enemies, who hoped the *Fromage* would come to some good, but greatly feared it would not.

M. Tartine, who had sailed through life with none but friends, began to taste the sweets of power. On the whole, though, he was happy. The *Fromage* was a tangible thing. It appeared; it sold. How describe the sensations of editor and proprietor on that magic afternoon when all down the line of Boulevards flew the cry of hawkers and kiosk-women, "Demandez le *Fromage*, Messieurs, qui vient de paraître!" Rabelaisian was the banquet that night in the scarlet room at Brébant's; and let us pass leniently over the fact that, on returning to his suburban villa in the small hours, the enchanted M. Veaudor imagined his house had been ornamented during his absence with a double staircase. •

So three months have passed. And here let it be said that Mercury, the newspaper deity, awards to all French prints at starting a sort of treble honeymoon. It must be a sorry sheet, indeed, that cannot ride for three months over waves and clear of rocks with sails sunlit, a fair breeze behind, and a hopeful crew on board. Subscriptions pour in—where from nobody knows; but the *abonné* is a type which seems multipliable *ad infinitum*.

Casual purchasers abound and increase as though Frenchmen had never yet found a paper to suit them, and meant to go on buying every new one steadily till they succeeded. Advertisers, so shy a body in other lands, hurry with preference to new French prints; in short, it is a time of gold jingling and amity, truffles and belief in Providence.

Then comes the second quarter, which is the Cape Horn of journalism, and if we would know how M. Tartine weathered the same, let us skip this second term of three months and call upon him while the *Fromage* is printing on its first page "No. 183," and while he, immured in his sanctum, is going over the account books with M. Veaudor. Can those be the same men as six months ago? Is that one with the rough head and the bloodshot eyes Tartine? and this other, who looks as if he had washed his face in vinegar, is that the once sanguine Veaudor? Veaudor is glaring, and Tartine is gesticulating; and it comes to this, that Tartine wants a hundred thousand francs more, under pain of seeing the paper go to smash. Moreover—and judge of the bitterness of experience which must have dictated this request—Tartine insists upon being let alone in his department. Two men cannot hold the reins together. There must be no more country cousins nor fellow-cheese-mongers of Veaudor's introduced on to the staff, with pockets full of manuscript. Veaudor himself must submit his prose to be edited in the usual way.

"What!" shrieks Veaudor; "have my writings excluded from my own paper?"

"Am I editor or not?" howls Tartine.

"A pretty editor!" thunders Veaudor; "when I began my '*Histoire du Fromage*,' you converted it into a buffoon burlesque to make people laugh."

"And a good thing too," retorts Tartine, impatiently; "fancy talking seriously of cheese! Who cares for cheese?"

"Why do you eat any then?" is Veaudor's sarcastic retort, hissed in a tone of most withering scorn; and he adds, "But look here; there's no bandying of words needed. It's you who

have driven us into this ditch. You've had friends of your own to write leaders which I couldn't read, and jokes which neither I nor my friends could understand. You've thrown away every good chance. That assurance company wanted to give us a lump sum; Mademoiselle Gredinette, the actress, was for paying us so much a line; there were other people who came to us with money, and you snubbed them all!"

"And I suppose you'd have had me accept!" yells Tartine, with eyes aflame. "You'd have had us sell ourselves to the assurance office, to the actress—to any confounded rogue who came to us with a ten-sous piece to buy a puff!"

"Well, I want to make money!" roars M. Veaudor.

"Go back and adulterate cheeses then," sings out M. Tartine.

"Ah, cheeses!" foams M. Veaudor. "I tell you, Monsieur Tartine, if you'd done nothing worse than make cheeses all your life, you'd be an honest man than you are at present; and you wouldn't be coming to me for a hundred thousand francs to put into your pockets."

This is too much for M. Tartine. He springs bolt upright, and, resting his hands on the table, leans forward till his nose and his partner's almost touch. "Listen to me, you discoloured fragment of mouldy gruyère; since I've been working with you I've not drawn a centime of salary. All the money I had saved has gone into the common fund, and I have toiled like a pack-mule day and night. The money is wanted to advertise the paper and save it from the ruin into which it would have run long ago if it hadn't been for my efforts."

Here M. Veaudor laughs creakingly, a scathing laugh: "Bah! your efforts! and what account do you take of my capital—my three hundred thousand francs—Monsieur Tartine?"

"Your capital! what would it have been worth without my labour?" bellows M. Tartine.

"Pish! don't talk to me of labour," responds M. Veaudor, with a laugh ten times more sour and contemptuous than before,

"I could get any man to do better work than you for half the price—even if it were half nothing."

"Then you shall," shrieks M. Tartine, who looks as if he were growing epileptic. "I give you my resignation, Monsieur Veandor; I'll retire here this moment, and to-morrow morning—yes, to-morrow morning, Monsieur Veandor—I'll have you out for your insults in the Bois de Vincennes and shoot a bullet through your head."

M. Veandor does not want a bullet through the head, and so, turning slightly pale and with somewhat of choking accent, yelps, "No, you sha'n't: I'll put myself under the protection of the law. I'll bring an action against you for breach of contract and recover my money. I'll sell you up, throw you into gaol, and drive you from the country."

Here we must draw a curtain, for a printer's devil, who had come with proofs, and was listening outside with his ear to the keyhole, swears he heard a scuffle. In another moment the pair of tried friends are seen bolting dishevelled into the street, the one shouting, "I'll go to my seconds!" the other vociferating, "I'll call on my lawyer!"

That evening somebody strolls into Brébant's and reports pleasantly that Tartine and his capitalist have quarrelled and parted; whereupon one of M. Tartine's best friends brightens up wonderfully and ejaculates, "Poor Tartine, I always thought he was a simpleton!"

II.

MARRIAGE.

I.—THE BRIDEGROOM.

WHEN fortune cheats a Frenchman he has a resource left him in marriage. M. Timoléon Tartine, having thrown all his savings into an unproductive paper, having worked on the same for six months without profit, and having, finally, to avoid an action for breach of contract, surrendered all claims on, and rights of proprietorship in, the *Fromage*, besides binding himself under a forfeit of a hundred thousand francs neither to found a new paper of his own nor to edit the paper of anybody else for a period of two years, finds himself reflecting that life in single harness is a failure.

But this must not be taken to mean that M. Tartine, renouncing the pomps of this commercial world, aspires merely to domestic repose. He is much too good a Frenchman for any such nonsense. He has been bitten by the tarantula of glory, and will never rest satisfied until he is editor once more. What he wants is five thousand louis d'or to pay his forfeit, and another ten or fifteen thousand to start in newspaperdom afresh. But this time he will be sole proprietor as well as editor, and the best way to become so is to marry a woman who shall have at least 500,000 francs as her portion.

Accordingly M. Tartine pays a visit to his family notary, and explains his case with all the candour usual in such transactions, and thereby earns the esteem of the lawyer, who likes to see young men take a practical view of life and sacrifice nothing to illusion. The pair go into the business. M. Tartine is young,

he has a name, he can earn thirty thousand francs a year by his pen, and he moves when it pleases him in well-gloved society. With such advantages he ought to find a wife possessing the needed half-million francs. The notary shakes his head. He thinks 400,000 francs is a good dower. M. Tartine sticks firmly to 500,000 as his lowest figure. The notary strokes his chin. Very well; he will make no promises, but look about him and see. Let M. Tartine call again that day week.

Now the notary may or may not know of a wife to suit M. Tartine, but if not, there are plenty of marriage agencies which will supply him with the article ready made. When marriage is regarded as a monetary operation, what can be more natural and proper than that its preliminaries should be treated in the same cool and knowing way as a purchase of bricks or the hire of a house? So when M. Timoléon calls again on the legal adviser of the Tartines, this luminary fancies he knows of a young lady who has half a million francs, a good education, and large *espérances*.

This means "hopes," and pray let us admire that delicate word, which the most tasteful nation in the world has coined for the use of heirs. "I shall have so much down and so much in 'hopes,'" says the artless maiden to her playmates—*i.e.*, "so much down, and the hope of papa dying soon and leaving me some more."

M. Tartine, however, likes the sound of the phrase, and asks point blank how old the parents are, and what chance there is of their soon departing a life of sorrow. It turns out that the money is all on the mother's side, and that the father lives in his own country, which is Montenegro. The mention of this principality throws a slight chill into the negotiations. M. Tartine has been wont to write of Montenegro as of a region fertile in Counts whose habit is to shine meteor-like in Paris during a few weeks and then vanish mysteriously, forgetting to pay their debts.

The notary confesses that this Montenegrin is a Count, but not divorced from his wife; they only live apart, that's all. The

name is Frailski, and the Countess Frailski is a fascinating woman, with a *baïouche* of her own and a mansion in the best quarter of Paris. M. Tartine sees the lady in his mind's eye, and begins to wonder whether marriage is so very necessary after all. The notary perceives the wavering, and having of course no further interest in the matter than the wish to benefit a client, lets fall a few words which chink like new-coined napoléons : "I said half a million, but in consideration of an alliance with a writer of your reputation the dowry might possibly be raised to 750,000 francs ; besides which, as I have said, the 'hopes' are very large, very."

Three-quarters of a million francs would float M. Tartine to any position in the commonwealth he chose to steer for. He would found a paper which should eclipse all other papers ; he would rule Paris ; in ten years he might be a Cabinet Minister and get elected to the Academy.

"Three-quarters of a million," he murmurs ; "yes, but tell me something more about this Count Frailski. Why should such a rich and noble family desire an alliance with me ? Then, again, I suppose the money would be tied up in such a way that I could not touch a farthing of it ?"

Poor Tartine is already nibbling. The notary goes into figures, and shows that the income of 750,000 francs, invested in railway debentures paying 6 per cent., is a fine thing of itself ; "but there is no necessity," adds he quietly, "for tying up the whole of the capital. The Frailskis would be perfectly aware that they were dealing with a man of honour. I know they respect and admire you greatly." -

This is very soothing. M. Tartine puts out a few more feelers in the direction of the railway stock ; but they are no longer very reluctant feelers, and the notary appears to have got him fairly by the head and shoulders when he says, "You know, my dear Tartine, there have been no overtures from the Frailskis about this marriage. Being acquainted with the family, I can answer that they would be sensible enough to prefer an alliance with

a man of your talent and reputation to one with a suitor having nothing but an empty title to recommend him. But I have not mentioned you to them. All I know is that your writings have made you a favourite with the Countess, and that her daughter, who has not long left school, will be in no want of adorers ready to enter the lists against you."

This is a judicious fillip, and recalls M. Tartine to the full desirability of marriage, and even speedy marriage. After all, there can be nothing very wrong in people who have three-quarters of a million to dispose of. He will call at the Montenegrin legation and inquire just for conscience's sake whether Count Frailski is authentic, though at the idea that some other competitor may outstrip him in the race for three-quarters of a million his prejudices begin to melt apace, and he feels as if he should like to abridge all vain formalities. He looks at his watch, rises to go, and after giving his counsellor plenipotential leave to act for him, asks a little shyly, and with fingers on the door-handle, whether the young lady is pretty.

It is to be noted that up to this moment the young lady's face, her temper, accomplishments, or defects have not been for an instant considered. The notary opens a desk and answers carelessly, "Here are a few photographs of Mademoiselle Hermine, but they are not good ones, and don't make her half pretty enough." With which words he hands M. Tartine a vignette that would have disarmed Og, the King of Bashan, and his army of threescore men.

M. Tartine draws his breath and drops his hat. He is afraid to speak lest he should learn that this is the likeness of somebody else—of a houri demoralising the Caliph of Bagdad, or of a songstress devouring the hearts and millions of an enraptured people. But the notary sidles up to him and says tranquilly: "Pretty, isn't she?" and M. Tartine feels as if a pair of wings had been added to his boots and were lifting him off the carpet.

The blood flies to his head, and he picks up his hat. "When will you introduce me?" he asks; and as the lawyer appears to

hesitate, he adds in, the tone of a conspirator, "It must be to-day ; this very day."

"Very well, my dear Timoléon," laughs the notary, good-humouredly. "Come this evening, and we will go and pay our respects together to the Countess."

M. Tartine pockets his photograph and bolts down the staircase four steps at a time on his way to the hairdresser's. The notary meanwhile returns to his labours, well pleased to think that if the marriage takes place Madame de Frailski will pay him a fee of five thousand francs. But while M. Tartine is having his hair cut, suppose we call on the lady.

II.—THE BRIDE.

WHILE M. Timoléon Tartine was yet in the swaddling-clothes phase of existence, Madame de Frailski, then called Mademoiselle Cascadine, danced before the people of Paris. Her talents, displayed on the stage of a minor theatre, earned her a salary of £200 a year ; and she contrived to save out of this income something like fifty thousand francs each twelvemonth, besides keeping herself suitably supplied with diamonds and other necessities of life. In due course she went and charmed other peoples, Austrians, Swedes, and the like. Her savings increased, her diamonds accumulated, and her financial instincts, affectionately guided by a few eminent bankers and stockbrokers, led her into speculations which succeeded, so that she soon afforded one more illustration to the edifying fact that virtue is its own reward.

At this juncture, meeting with an exotic magnate whose escutcheon much wanted regilding, she proposed to unite herself to him in wedlock, and pay him a pension of ten thousand francs a year, on condition of his retiring from her sight immediately after the marriage ceremony and being no more seen. The noble heart agreed to the terms of this bargain, and made of Mademoiselle Cascadine a Countess. But this venture succeeded less well

than the others. Madame de Frailski's footmen wore coronets on their clothing, but their mistress found that the honoured name of her husband was not such an easy passport into titled society as she had expected.

Even in Italy Madame de Frailski's visitors were more or less at war with one clause or other of the decalogue, and such of them as were not, called mostly to raise small loans. Tired of these pleasant friends, having drunk and re-drunk to loathing of what is commonly called enjoyment, and being the mother of a daughter whom she loved and who would soon be marriageable, the good lady returned to her own country, seeing the future loom ahead of her in no very brilliant colours. No doubt a daughter, rich and pretty as hers, could find husbands enough, and eligible ones. Some penniless grandee might take her for her dowry, or some honest man, titled or otherwise, might woo her for her beauty, and marry her, on the stipulation that she should not bring him a centime.

But the Countess neither wished her daughter to be unhappy in her union with a raffish husband nor herself to be humiliated by some immaculate son-in-law who would exclude her from his home and teach her child to be ashamed of her. The man she sighed for was one who in marrying the daughter would take the mother under his moral protection too. He must be a being of acknowledged merit, wielding social influence—one who would shield her, champion her, make of her house his home, and attract there people of the respectable sort, to mix with whom had become her settled craving. Now, in France there is no man in a better position to effect this kind of thing than a celebrated author or journalist.

But to write what rebuffs the poor *ex-danseuse* had experienced in her search after the phoenix son-in-law would require a thick volume. She had negotiated, finessed, fee'd marriage agencies, dressed herself in black, gone to mass, allured a priest to dinner, opened her drawing-rooms to none but discreet gentlemen of heavy metal, and lavished more in charities—not anonymous—

than a gross of untainted Christians. But the thing would not work, and, to tell the truth, she was quite at a loss to understand the reason of it.

Frenchwomen, as a fact, do not easily grasp these matters. Our Countess called to mind the number of unhang'd rascals she knew who were perfectly welcome in the best society; and she inveighed with exasperation against the social system which dealt out such uneven justice to the sexes. For all which, however, she felt that the social system she despised must get the better of her in the end, and she was dismally contemplating the probability of having to finish her life in the same company as she had begun it, when fate took pity on her condition and sent her M. Timoléon Tartine.

We must not wonder if the agent who had recommended her to the notary and the notary who brought her M. Tartine each expected to get £200 for their services. It would have been worth the while to pay half her fortune to secure a son-in-law who would bring honour, peace, and agreeable society to her declining years—a man whom everybody knew and liked, who himself, or through the pens of his friends, would sound her charitable deeds in the press and tell Paris what a privilege it was to be admitted to her parties—a man, in fine, who would act as bell-wether to all those Parisian Purge's sheep who at heart desire nothing better than to frequent a richly larded house if only somebody will show them the way.

So on the evening when M. Tartine is to be introduced by the notary, behold the mother and daughter under arms. The lawyer has sent a note to say he shall come at nine, and long before that hour the *mise-en-scène* which is to make of M. Tartine an enslaved man has been arranged and perfected. Madame de Frailski is in black velvet, and wears a lace cap, under the edges of which her hair, slightly powdered to make it look grey, beams with venerable austerity. Her only trinkets are a cross of black pearls, pendent from a necklace of the same humble jewel, her wedding-ring, and another ring with her Countess's coronet in sapphires.

On the sofa next her lies an altar-cloth, half finished (bought at an ecclesiastical vestment shop in that state the same afternoon), and a reading-desk lamp sheds its soft rays on a truly good book, bearing numerous marginal annotations.

On the side of the fireplace, opposite Madame de Frailski, sits l'Abbé Truffe, of the neighbouring church of Sainte Rosemonde, the Countess's confessor, who has been dining with her for the second time. Mademoiselle Hermine, dressed in white muslin, with a scarlet rose in the waist of her white sash and another in her golden hair, sits at the piano, and, as M. Tartine walks up the thickly muffled staircase, preceded by the lawyer, and the gravest of major-domos, he hears the notes of Mozart's "Requiem" issuing from the softest, most ecstatic of touches. The Countess is a good actress; she is supposed not to be aware of M. Tartine's coming visit. "Madame," says the notary with a deferential bow, "let me claim the privilege of an old friendship" (they have known each other, through the Matrimonial Agency, two days) "to introduce to you Monsieur Tartine, the renowned journalist."

"Monsieur Tartine's name is sufficient," is the Countess's gracious answer, "every one knows the most brilliant writer on the French press;" and with adroit frankness forestalling all future discoveries Madame de Frailski adds: "I was on the stage before I married, Monsieur Tartine, and feel a tie of consinship with all who serve art or literature—my confessor will tell you that my worship for good painting, music, and prose makes almost a pagan of me."

"Nay, dear lady, it at most serves as a very pardonable diversion from your many labours of charity," lisps the priest, who feels somehow that he has a part to play too, and plays it.

M. Tartine bends his head and looks about him for Mademoiselle Hermine. There she stands. Madame de Frailski says simply, "Monsieur Tartine, my daughter;" and M. Tartine confronts a vision far lovelier than her portrait, far lovelier

than anything he had ever hoped to see in this world of fogs and deceptions.

What does it matter to him whether Madame de Frailski has been on the stage, or whether the Count of that name lives in Montenegro?—though, for that matter, he has called at the Montenegrin legation and learned that the title is quite authentic. There he sits next the most ravishing apparition that was ever made palpable to bereave a man of his senses, and he conjures up in fancy a whole horde of Montenegrin Barons racing him neck and neck for this matchless pearl in her setting of gold, and beating him on the post by half a head.

Bashfulness is not a common failing of M. Tartine's in the presence of the adverse sex; but this time he feels as if he had left his tongue downstairs with his overcoat. Mademoiselle Hermine has resumed the work she was supposed to have been engaged on before she sat down to the piano, and she takes an early opportunity of letting fall a ball of worsted. M. Tartine goes down on his knees and thinks he should like to remain there for the natural term of his life; but he hazards a compliment as he hands back the worsted, and Mademoiselle Hermine smiles sweetly and blushes.

Mademoiselle Hermine is not stupid; she does not allow the full weight of conversation to drag on her partner; she leads him on imperceptibly, like a siren little thing as she is—for what abysses of artfulness lurk under the candid features of those Parisian maidens!—and M. Tartine soon contrives to thaw and to shine. He tells her she plays divinely. He asks her whether she draws; there is an album hard by, and she blushes anew. Well she may; for the tender mother, mistrusting her child's own performances, has bought a sheaf of etchings, pencil sketches, and water colours, so that M. Tartine admires with amazed and half-despairing eyes some landscapes by M. Justin Ouvrié, whose famous signature has been rubbed out to make way for that of Mademoiselle de Frailski.

O ye gods who manufacture ointment for the blind! will not

one of you step down and unseal the eyes of the infatuated *chroniqueur*? He is nearing the brink—he has got one foot over it—now in he goes altogether! When the notary makes a move to hint it is time to be going, M. Tartine sighs as if he were being pulled out of heaven by the skirt; and, rising to take leave, he asks in faltering accents for permission to call again.

Not many days afterwards all the papers in Paris, whereon M. Tartine has a footing, announce his approaching marriage to Mademoiselle Hermine de Frailski, daughter of the noble Count Frailski, one of the richest landowners in Montenegro, and of the Countess Frailski, renowned for her piety and good works. The match is purely one of love, but the dowry will be a million; and Madame de Frailski, to celebrate the auspicious event and to mark her respect for the noble profession of which her future son-in-law is a member, has sent twenty thousand francs to the Society for the Relief of Poor Printers.

Need it be said after this how M. Tartine feasted all his newspaper friends in a monster *agape*, where they drowned his bachelor life in six dozen of Veuve Clicquot; nor how the Count Frailski, fresh shaved and brushed and summoned from Montenegro for the special (and well paid) occasion, gave away the young lady, and then vanished for ever back to Montenegro again? Need it be said, either, that there was a contract before the marriage, at which it was perhaps lucky for M. Tartine that he had a keen notary to look after his interests, and save him from being chivalrously disinterested; or that finally everything went off well, including this lawyer, who received his well-earned fees, and that helpful institution, the long-established agency for promoting “Mariages à la Française?” And now let us trust that M. Tartine’s golden chains will hang less heavily upon him than gold occasionally does!

III.

PUBLIC LIFE.

I.—OFFICE SEEKING.

So thus our worthy friend was married to a young lady of dubious family connections, but of surpassing beauty, grace, and dower. Well, it has fared prosperously with M. Tartine during his honeymoon, and the two moons following. He has travelled, returned to live cheerfully under the same roof as his mother-in-law, and elaborate his pet scheme for founding a newspaper of which he shall be sole proprietor and editor, and which shall become the admiration and delight of Paris.

It is then that his mother-in-law puts a question to him point-blank, and says, "Why should you not enter public life, my dear Timoléon? No one is better fitted to hold an eminent post under Government than yourself; and prefectships are almost going begging now-a-days. You know it is always time enough to found a newspaper; indeed, as a prefect, you would have a journal at your disposal without its costing you a centime, and I think your brilliant intellect would find its proper sphere of activity if once you were in a commanding station."

M. Tartine's brilliant intellect tells him that there is a great deal of truth in all this, and he cannot help admiring the sound sense of which his mother-in-law gives daily proofs. Besides, marriage diverts a man's mind into new channels, and one of these channels is a strong reluctance to throw money away when it can be helped.

Now, if M. Tartine starts a journal within two years of the

time when he snapped his partnership with M. Veaudor, who assisted him in founding the *Fromage* newspaper, he is bound to pay M. Veaudor four thousand pounds as a forfeit. There is no help for it; the painful document was witnessed and registered by a public notary, and M. Veaudor, who was last heard of somewhere near the Bankruptcy Court, is not likely to exhibit any chivalrous disinterestedness in claiming what is his due. So it would be quite as well, thinks M. Tartine, to hang up the newspaper scheme until the two years have elapsed, and meanwhile to serve one's country in a post of emolument.

But, on the other hand, how serve anything so ludicrous in its essence and outward manifestations as a Government? M. Tartine has never seen a high dignitary ply his avocations in an embroidered swallow-tail without feeling stricken with mirth, and this tendency to laugh out of season, exhorting the public to share in his merriment, has brought M. Tartine to various kinds of troubles—fines, imprisonment, and such like. This he explains to Countess Frailski, who replies, however, with her wonted shrewdness, that one must never lay to heart peccadilloes gone by, and that Government, like marriage, hair dye, and flannel waistcoats, is the natural sport of youth and the comfort of mature age.

"Look, for instance, at your old colleague on the *Cigare*, M. Plumedoie," says she. "If there is a man in France who has railed more often at everything respectable I should like to see him. And yet M. Plumedoie is now a prefect, and a father, and has been making a most edifying speech about the necessity for reviving a belief in Government and the principle of authority. The fact is, my dear Timoléon, that we must select our opinions as we do our clothes, according to the climate we are enjoying. A man does not wear nankeen at St. Petersburg, nor furs at Nice; similarly, you who are sailing now, in latitudes full of sunshine can put off the rough frieze coat and hard gloves of wintry Opposition days. They may come in useful again by-and-by should you quarrel with Government; but, for the present try light

attractive clothes, and the colours that are in fashion. What do you say, *Hermine* ? ”

This is to her daughter, and as *Tartine* glances at his pretty wife, who is dressed as only Frenchwomen can dress, in clouds of sky-blue silk and lace, he thinks of what an adorable little *Préfète* she would make, and how the stubbornest Communist would feel his convictions thaw at the sight of her. So he assents to all his mother-in-law's suggestions, and sits down opposite a sheet of foolscap to crave an audience of one of the Cabinet Ministers. Nevertheless, the thought that he may some day make a speech on the principle of authority (he who has so often sneered and jeered at authority), like *Plumedoie*, his colleague, is very ticklesome to his fancy, and causes him to make blots which compel him to begin the letter again.

However, *Madame de Frailski* does not intend to rely on his epistolary eloquence. By-and-by, when *M. Tartine* goes out for his usual stroll and absinthe, the baronche, with its tall coachman and diminutive page—who look like a semicolon and a point of exclamation sitting side by side—is ordered round, and the Countess takes pretty *Madame Tartine* to look up the Minister in person. *M. Tartine* is never to know of this ; but a profound experience of the ways of mankind has convinced Countess *Frailski* that a comely face is not without its uses in smoothing a negotiation.

So the porter at the public office is mollified at beholding *Madame Tartine*, and doubly mollified when he finds a gold piece between his fingers ; and sundry clerks are mollified when *Madame Tartine* inquires naively whether the Minister can be seen ; and a private secretary loses his head entirely, and comes down from his official stilts, when the question is repeated to him, and *M. Tartine's* mother-in-law and wife sail triumphantly into his Excellency's presence without letter of audience or anything, because blue eyes are stronger than routine, and red lips than red tape. So next morning a mounted cuirassier rides up to *M. Tartine's* door, with his helmet and breastplate—nice cool things for

summer wear—and leaves a whitey-brown envelope, containing an appointment for 2 p.m. And M. Tartine ascribes it all to his own merits and glory, which is perfectly natural and proper, for if we failed to have a good opinion of ourselves the world might fail in that respect too, which would be highly undesirable.

“Good morning, Monsieur Tartine, I am glad to see you,” says his Excellency, when M. Tartine enters at 2 p.m. Our friend is attired in dress clothes, as the fashion is when one goes to see a French Minister, and his button-hole is ornamented with a slip of yellow ribbon, representing knighthood in the Order of the Pumpkin Mosquitos. We would gladly have overlooked the circumstance, and also the fact that M. Timoléon sent up his card as “Count de Tartine de Painbœurré,” but marriage, as above remarked, launches a man into new courses, and M. Tartine, who would have walked many a mile before donning a coronet on his own account, has been bereft of his free choice in the matter by Madame Tartine, acting at the instigation of her ambitious mother.

It seems that at some date not very easy to specify the Tartines did really hold in fief the noble domain of Painbœurré, whence the claim of Madame Tartine to put a shield and coronet on her carriage panels, and to style herself Countess for all social purposes; and, as to the Cross of the Pumpkin, M. Tartine earned that from the grateful monarch of Mosquitos by writing a *chronique*, which contrasted the political institutions of that favoured country very advantageously with those of France under M. Rouher. It would be difficult, by-the-by, to discover any Parisian journalist of some standing who was not entitled to sport the Mosquitos order, or some others analogous to it. And it has been said of some of these gentlemen that the colour of their opinions changed, chameleon-like, according to the hues of the different ribands they had set their hearts on; which is, of course, not true—for disagreeable things never are.

In any case, this is the first time M. Tartine has sported his order, and the urbanity of the Minister leads him to think that

there must be a majesty in the emblem of Mosquitos that he never dreamed of. "Sit down, M. Tartine," says the Minister; and as M. Tartine obeys, he muses over some suitable form of exordium, then begins, brushing his hat the wrong way: "I feel very ridiculous, your Excellency, for I have come to ask you whether you have not a prefectship to spare—something like that which you gave to that ass—hem, I beg your pardon—to my respected brother, Plumedoie?"

The Minister arches his eyebrows, and affects to feel surprised at this communication; and truth to say, now that Madame Tartine is no longer there to pervert his judgment with her coaxing face, he recollects, gloomily enough, that this fellow in front of him is a kind of ill-conditioned wasp, who has been stinging reputable folk all his life.

"You are a journalist, Monsieur Tartine," he answers at length, "and we don't like journalists."

"I never met anybody who did," is M. Tartine's reply, "and, as your Excellency was once a journalist yourself, I suppose you would like us less than anybody." But you know a prefect is not a journalist; so if you gave me a prefectship you would be diminishing the tribe to which I belong by one member, which is at least something by way of a beginning."

"May I ask, Monsienr Tartine, what your opinions are?" proceeds the Minister, not relishing the allusion to the days too when he scribbled. . . .

"I never had an opinion, and consequently I am quite free from scruples," responds M. Tartine, smoothing his ruffled hat with his cuff. "If Government were to commission me to proclaim that cauliflowers grew with their heads under ground, I would do it cheerfully, esteeming that there is doubtless quite as much to be said for that view of the case as for the other."

"There is but one view to every case, Monsieur Tartine, and that view is the right one," responds the Minister, sternly. "I have here a vacant prefectship where a pestilent fellow has sprung up persuading men that they ought to share and share alike, being

all equally descended from baboons, on the strength of which they behave in the most factious fashion. How should you cope with this disgraceful state of things if you were prefect?"

"Well, if my opponents claimed to be descended from baboons I should certainly do nothing to disturb such a wholesome belief," answers M. Tartine; "I would even try to convert them to that opinion if they were backward in embracing it of themselves."

"And supposing they called you a baboon's grandchild, and me too?"

"Well, that would of course be a delicate matter," replies M. Tartine. "Speaking for myself, I should deny the imputation, and as to your Excellency, why, I should say, 'See how vastly improved he is since his ancestors' time, and bless Providence that we live in a progressive age.' As for sharing alike, those who have *not* progressed cannot hope to be put on a par with those who have."

"Monsieur Tartine, I am afraid you will not do for a prefectship," remarks the Minister.

"I am sorry for that, your Excellency," ejaculates M. Tartine, "for I would rather serve under a statesman of your wit than be his enemy, which must infallibly happen if you don't kennel me in some way. You know the conditions of successful journalism are few but peremptory. If I start a paper I can never raise its circulation by publishing a hymn in your praise every morning, so I must hunt about for your Excellency's blunders and lay stress on them, which, I repeat, would be a distasteful though necessary duty."

"You will remember, though, Monsieur Tartine, that it is not I who refuse you the prefectship," observes the Minister, "but candidates for these posts are discussed in Cabinet Council, and what could I say in favour of a gentleman who has no opinions?"

The Minister fixes his eyes like policemen's lanterns on the journalist as he says this, and M. Tartine, holding his hat like a banjo, answers, "Well, if their Excellencies discuss me in

Council, I hope you will tell them what I said about cauliflowers. And if you will allow me to drop a respectful hint, I would suggest that it is better to have a prefect whose mind would be free from bias as to these vegetables than one who would be as obstinate in maintaining that they grew right side upwards. You know it might suit your Excellency for political purposes to correct the prevalent notions as to cauliflowers, or indeed as to other things; and an unprejudiced man makes a good servant."

The Minister's features relax into the semblance of a grin, and he says, "Good day, Monsieur Tartine; I make no promises, but I am glad to have seen you."

M. Tartine rises and bows: "I have to thank your Excellency for your condescension," and having taken his leave he smirks in the antechamber to a first, a second, and third clerk; for the small coin of manners is that which brings the best return.

M. Tartine takes off his Mosquitos ribbon when he gets into the street, and on his return home describes his interview with the Minister succinctly to the Countess Frailski. The next day that amiable lady and her daughter repair again to his Excellency's presence; and this visit is repeated yet a third and a fourth time. So one evening, when he comes in to dinner, M. Tartine finds his pretty wife radiant as a blush-rose, and she exclaims, holding something behind her: "What do you think has arrived for you, Timoléon? Why, a prefectship—that of Singebourg!"

Whereat M. Tartine, modestly concluding, as before, that his merits are evidently such as could not be overlooked, takes the document and reads his new dignity engrossed at full length. But this is not all; for as it is unseemly that a prefect should not be decorated, a patent is appended appointing M. Tartine to the Legion of Honour, and requesting him to appear at the Chancellerie and pay one hundred and twenty-five francs as fees.

Altogether, it is a memorable day, and Madame Tartine—or

Countess Tartine de Painbœurré, if you like better to be accurate—cuts a strip of scarlet ribbon and pins it into her husband's coat. "It is a delightful prefecture, you know, Timoléon," she says, standing on tiptoe to perform this work. "And all you will have to do will be to keep down some wicked men who say we are descended from apes. You don't think I am descended from an ape, do you?"

"You!" sings out M. Timoléon, "who says so? Let me catch him!"

"Ah, mon ami, vous serez un grand homme d'état," remarks M. Tartine's mother-in-law.

II.—OFFICE-HOLDING.

So that respected organ the *Journal Officiel* gazettes M. Timoléon Tartine to the prefectship of Singebourg, not however by the title of Count de Tartine de Painbœurré, for although the Government is imbued with the necessity of upholding the principle of authority, it nevertheless bears a Republican label, and titles are at a discount. Simultaneously one of the semi-official papers inserts the honeyed mention that M. Tartine has obtained his appointment as a reward for his long and valiant services towards the Opportunist party. M. Tartine would much rather that this delicate statement had been omitted, for it reads as though he had long been in the secret pay of the Préfecture de Police, and had written articles calling the Opportunists traitors to the Republican cause, simply with the view of throwing dust into the eyes of a confiding public.

But the Government know what they are about. When a journalist, having by marriage or other means obtained money enough to start a paper of his own and become a nuisance, applies for a post of emolument, he gets it; only Government take good care that he shall wear their livery in the full light of day and without any equivocation as to his sentiments. Indeed, a

journalist who enlists in the official ranks virtually paralyzes his own right arm from that day, and all he may write thereafter will be as though it were penned with his left hand. Let him throw up his post and return to factious journalism, let him write leaders never so beautiful on the rights of man, and the never-tiring march of progress, his hold on the public is gone, and people will always say sceptically : " Yes, that's all very fine ; but this is Tartine, who held the post of emolument and was kicked out. All he wants is to get back again."

Maybe our good friend has some dawning perception of his altered aspect in the public eye. His old boulevard chums greet him pleasantly and civilly, but their familiarity has gone ; he is no longer one of their set, nor can ever be again. Good-bye to the bantering talk over absinthe and cigars about this one who has sold himself to Government, that other who is fishing for a rich wife, this third who has slapped the face of a Government *employé*, and means to run him through the arm at Vincennes to-morrow. Good-bye to those jovial leaders written at midnight at the Café Anglais by half a dozen journalists and as many actresses, each contributing his or her piece of wit, till the pages fizzed and sparkled like Pommery on the pop, and the bourgeois who read the whole thing next day exclaimed, " Ces gens ont le diable au corps !" Alas ! nowadays M. Tartine must not be seen in the slips of a theatre talking nonsense with some prima donna of *opéra bouffe*. He can no longer stroll into any newspaper office he pleases and write epigrams for the editor till the latter is free to chat with him. If M. Tartine were to offer any editor an epigram now it might be supposed that this effusion were meant to serve in some way the occult designs of Government, and it would be refused. All the papers where M. Tartine formerly had a footing are closed to him ; if he writes at all, it must be in some semi-official sheet, where his thoughts will be printed in leaded type and be followed by an editorial, stating courteously that the paper does not hold itself responsible for the opinions of M. Tartine, the prefect of Singebourg.

On the other hand, what a queer pack of friends must the new prefect now consort with! Brother prefects who happen to be in Paris call to offer their congratulations; and they are dignitaries of portly presence, mostly bald and long-bearded; they smile with their teeth instead of their lips; their hands are cold as fins; and their talk is of lumbago and Ministerial circulars. Then, when M. Tartine goes to the Government office for his instructions, the clerks grin at him as if he were one of their gang now; and that owl Plumedoie, who made the famous speech on the principle of authority, meets him on the staircase, claps him on the shoulder, and shouts, "Hallo, Tartine, we're both rowing in the same galley!"

Moreover, M. Tartine finds that it won't do any longer to cut jokes at the Minister, as he could do when, being an independent journalist, he was the equal of any man in the land. His Excellency has become his hierarchical chief, and must be listened to with deference; he tells M. Tartine that the Government have entrusted him with an important mission which will require a constant display of tact, temper, and unimpeachable principles; and poor Tartine must perforce bow his head, and hope he shall be equal to the occasion. However, there is no use in being gloomy on the subject; the leak is cut, and must be swallowed.

So M. Tartine, his wife, and his mother-in-law, prepare their luggage, and one bright day set off for Singebourg with a retinue of man-cook, butler, two lady's-maids, page, and a coachman with crimson smalls. Countess Frailski is in high feather, Madame Tartine, who has brought four-and-twenty dresses with her, tries to school her winsome features to a look of official gravity; and M. Tartine lifts his hat with a somewhat hang-dog countenance, when the guard of the prefecture turn out and present arms to him as his carriage jolts into the court-yard.

It is a thrilling moment; but not more so than the next day when the bishop of the diocese and his clergy, the general of the district and his staff, the president of the court of justice and his

assessors, the public prosecutor and his deputy, the mayor and municipal council, the justice of the peace, commissary of police, postmaster, archivist, receiver-general, ranger of the woods and forests, and the whole army of Government functionaries to the number of some two hundred and fifty individuals, all fed out of the public taxes, wait upon M. Tartine in the state saloon of the prefecture to pay their respects.

M. Tartine is attired in a silver-laced swallow-tail, white cravat, cocked hat with black feathers, silver-hilted sword, gorgeous inexpressibles, and a cross on his bosom. Catching sight of himself in a glass opposite, he fancies that he must have been changed in his sleep, and that he is a spurious Tartine, having nothing in common with the Tartine of bygone days. But he is recalled to a sense of realities by the imposing entry of Monseigneur the Bishop in lilac stockings and violet cassock; and his mother-in-law motions discreetly to him that he must only walk three steps forward to welcome "Sa Grandeur," lest the State should seem in his person to be making undue concessions to the Church and so establish a dangerous precedent.

Behold, then, Prefect Tartine in the full pomp and circumstance of office. Sentries bawl "All's well!" under his bedroom windows every quarter of an hour through the night; yellow-belted gendarmes post up the proclamations he has signed; a small boy is hauled off in custody for grazing his hat with a kite-string; and M. Tartine insensibly falls into the habit of replying that he shall give all things his most anxious consideration. He wears dark trousers, and has to finger his hatbrim fifty times if he walks a hundred yards down the street; even the dogs seem to know him, and give him a wide berth from respect.

The best box at the local theatre is his, and he has a row of chairs to himself in the cathedral, which in accordance with fashionable official atheism he never visits, though on the other hand his wife and mother-in-law make a very considerable display of devotion. If he rings for a glass of water the summons is answered by an usher with a silver chain round his neck; and

the post brings him every morning about half a hundredweight of letters stating grievances or asking for patronage, appointments, and favours. A public banquet cannot take place without his leave. The pieces to be performed at the theatre are submitted to his luminous approval; it lies with him to close the cafés at the hour he pleases, or to close an obnoxious café altogether; and a cringing worthy, who is the editor of the prefectural newspaper, waits upon him from time to time with a sheaf of proof-slips, and craves to know his good pleasure.

These are the sweets of office, and are fitly crowned by a venerable chief clerk with a face like a walnut-shell, who has been a fixture at the prefecture for fifty years, and initiates all incoming prefects to their duties. He is deferentially paternal with Prefect Tartine, and explains everything to him as one might to a well-meaning lad whose intellect was weak; and Tartine cannot help feeling a great awe for this ancient relic, whose hands have grown shrivelled in fingering public moneys. One day, though, he musters up courage enough to question him as to the prefectural salary, a point upon which he had not yet touched.

"Your salary is thirty thousand francs a year, Monsieur le Préfet," answers the relic softly. "Besides which there are five thousand francs table money, and pickings."

"M. Tartine colours and frowns: "Pickings! what do you mean by that, Monsieur Vermoulu?"

The venerable M. Vermoulu coughs and rejoins without perturbation, "Pickings are the official perquisites which most prefects add to salaries which they deem insufficient, Monsieur le Préfet. Thus when the Council-General votes sums for public works the money is lodged in the prefect's hands, who can invest it till wanted, and keep the interest for himself. Again he can divert a part of the sum by the system of *virements*, which enables him to reckon under the head of prefecture expenses moneys voted—say for the hospitals. Again, when a Commune wishes to obtain subsidies for a new road, bridge, or church, it is a courteous custom to present a gratuity to the prefect in order to indemnify him for the

trouble he may incur in urging the claims of that Commune upon the notice of Government. These things are always done, Monsieur le Préfet."

"Enough, Monsieur Vermoulu," exclaims M. Tartine, in a tone of much dignity. "Never let me hear a word more on this subject if you and I are to remain friends."

Whereat the venerable chief clerk bows, for he has heard this sort of reply so often before that he has become used to it ; which does not prevent his being equally well used to see the prefects inquire after their pickings with punctual regularity a few months after they have been in office.

However, M. Tartine has other things to learn beside this. He soon learns, for instance, that the town is split up into factions, at virulent loggerheads with one another, and that a part of his duty consists in keeping these factions from flying at each's throats in public places. Thus, in addition to the political feuds which class the population under five banners always ready to march, there are private enmities born of women's quarrels and implacable in their social ferocity. The chief judge's wife having been eclipsed by the public prosecutor's lady, the two husbands exchange vindictive utterances in court, and come to Prefect Tartine to complain of each other's insolence ; meantime, the bishop wants to excommunicate the mayor, for having the nuns removed from the primary schools ; and the mayor's sister-in-law having said things damaging to the reputation of the receiver-general's aunt, there is a dead block in matters of finance when rating questions are considered with a view to road repairs.

But worse than all is the fierce vendetta that has been declared between the general of the garrison's grandmother and the female cousin twice removed to the cathedral archdeacon. There is no healing this breach, which arose from a struggle—some say a fight—for precedence at the door of the confessional, and the dispute has already arrayed the wives of the six departmental members in hostile array on either side—three of the ladies maintaining that the general's grandmother is no better than

she should be, and the other three bruited things which we would much rather not repeat about the archdeacon's cousin twice removed.

Lucky is it then for M. Tartine that, instead of being a miserable bachelor, who would have walked incautiously into the whirlpool and been swept away like a cork, he should have a prudent mother-in-law, who finds out all about the feuds before she has been a week in the town, and so arranges the prefectural dinner parties that ladies at daggers drawn shall not be invited together, and have out their little differences over the *entrées*. She also restrains her daughter from rushing inconsiderately into the fight, as young married ladies are apt to do ; and she is very useful to M. Tartine in giving the bishop to understand that her son-in-law really has most religious principles, although he doesn't go to church, the general that he greatly admires the Duc d'Aumale, and therefore reverences the Comte de Paris, the chief judge that he is a thoroughgoing Opportunist as he seems to be, and the mayor that he is at heart a real Radical—which makes matters a little more smooth for M. Tartine than they might have been had he frankly avowed that all four parties might go and get hanged for all he cared.

As to the representative of the fifth or extreme party, the wrongheaded sophist who not merely argued that we are all, and especially Government officials, sprung from baboons, but also that every man of means trades on the sufferings of the poor, Madame de Frailski had nothing to do with him ; for she could not possibly invite such an individual to the prefectural at-homes, and besides he possessed a newspaper in which he held M. Tartine up to ridicule twice a week. As he was suspected of being on friendly terms with certain Anarchist leaders,—the men who assert that dynamite furnishes the only fit solution for the social problem,—Madame de Frailski advised that he should be put down with the firm hand of the law, and the firm hand in question—*vulgo*, the public prosecutor—was instant in, beseeching M. Tartine to let him issue a summons against this person.

But M. Tartine does not like prosecuting a newspaper man, the less so as the baboon-sophist turns out to be M. Roquet, an old journalistic friend of his, in whose company he once enjoyed a month's imprisonment. He wonders whether conciliation would not do with M. Roquet, but somehow, when the two old chums meet, it is M. Tartine who looks sheepish, and M. Roquet who mockingly inflicts a cut direct. It cost M. Tartine something after this to decide on having M. Roquet arrested and prosecuted for his detestable Anarchist doctrines. But the public prosecutor insists uncompromisingly on this act of vigour, and Madame de Frailski, foreseeing that the prefect's character for firmness may be at stake in it, strongly opines in the same sense. And so Roquet is arrested, and from that day the fiat goes forth that Prefect Tartine is not a man to be trifled with.

IV.

PATERNAL GOVERNMENT.

I.—WITH THE SNAFFLE.

THREE months have elapsed since M. Timoléon Tartine installed himself as prefect in the town of Singebourg. When last we saw him he was tasting the first sweets of office ; he had resolved to shew himself firm but affable, an upholder of order, but a friend to freedom ; and he had moved in the venerable face of M. Vermoulu, his chief clerk, to resist the temptation of increasing his official salary by customary, but illicit pickings.

For the last quarter M. Tartine has been receiving four or five telegrams a day from the Home Office ; there has been a strike in his neighbourhood with somewhat serious disturbances ; somebody has pasted a caricature of him on a dead wall and been taken into custody ; and the Bishop of Singebourg has issued a pastoral anathematizing the Radical mayor and town council for dismissing the nuns from the elementary schools. These and other tribulations have caused M. Tartine to grow lean, and so he has sworn to M. Vermoulu, his chief clerk, that such a state of things can go on no longer, which is always another way of saying that it will go on for ever so long.

We intrude upon the pair as they sit together during business hours just after the morning post has come in, M. Tartine tearing open envelopes with vicious energy, and M. Vermoulu smiling placidly over a petition from some taxpayérs, recommending a grievance to his notice. In the next room M. Tartine's private secretary, an old journalist chum, is inditing, on official paper, a

letter, which he will presently despatch gratis with the Government frank to Mademoiselle Pironette, of the Théâtre des Folies Comiques, and in company with him is another secretary, who has just laid down the *Vie Parisienne*, to write and inform a citizen that after giving the matter his most attentive consideration, M. Tartine can hold out no hope that an abuse complained of will ever be remedied.

Meantime M. Tartine, plodding through a ciphered despatch by means of a manuscript key, brings down key and despatch with a loud bang on his desk, and howls to M. Vermoulu—"Now listen : here is this Government at me again. No one is bound to stand this, and as I am a living sinner I won't. They say the Opportunists accuse me of weakness, and the Radical papers—which that fool our mayor corresponds with—all bray that I am furthering reactionary manœuvres. A wholesale tallow-chandler to whom I refused a State contract for tallow-dips, turns out to be second cousin to the Minister's godmother, and he has been shouting that I want to paralyze the sinews of trade. On the other hand it seems the man who got the tallow contract has an uncle who was educated by the Jesuits, and the Ministry of the Interior is convinced that the candles of such a one must be adulterated. But that's not all ; for there is that swashbuckler of a general, whose officers hissed a song at the theatre the other night and got kicked out by the public. The general comes to me and wants to have the theatre closed for a month ; I answer that his officers would do better to learn their drill and drink less absinthe than to set up for musical critics, and off goes the general to Paris to bellow that I'm inciting the population to hatred and contempt of the army. I'll tell you what, Monsieur Vermoulu ; there'll be murder in the shop before we've done, for I'll strangle that general and pitch the mayor out of the window. I'm not going to have my character blackened, and I won't have the Home Office writing such things as this to me. Hark !—'P. Q. X. 6. W. 3.' No. Where's the key ? But you know what I mean, Monsieur Vermoulu ; it's time to shew my teeth. I can

bite as ferociously as any other man when I'm put to it, so I tell you !”

“Certainly,” answers M. Vermoulu, and he takes a pinch of snuff with that satisfaction which can only be derived from snuff presented gratis by candidates for *bureaux de tabac*.

“Ah, yes,” proceeds M. Tartine, springing to his legs and pacing so furiously up and down that he brushes the snuffbox out of M. Vermoulu's hand, and scatters its contents on the hearthrug. “I beg your pardon ; but they shall find out what it is to rouse the tiger nature lurking beneath the lamb's skin. There shall be tears in Singebourg before I've done with it, and people who think me a booby shall learn to tremble at my approach ! My mind is irrevocably made up, Monsieur Vermoulu, and—and, in fact, what do you advise me to do ?”

The outbursts of M. Tartine so frequently end in this way that the venerable M. Vermoulu, who under the names of successive prefects has been the virtual ruler of Singebourg for some two score years or so, is quite used to the emergency and prepared for it. Stroking his ancient and hairless head to give himself an air of reflection, he says at last patriarchally, as he kneels on the hearthrug scooping up his snuff, “I think, Monsieur le Préfet, I would imprison an Anarchist ;” and evidently convinced that he has recommended a sovereign specific, he rises to his time-honoured legs, dusts his knees with a yellow pocket handkerchief, and rewards himself with a new pinch.

“Imprison !” echoes M. Tartine, whose bubbling wrath subsides at the word like a saucepan of milk lifted off a fire. “You're always for imprisoning somebody, Monsieur Vermoulu, it's just like my mother-in-law. Yet you know that the only time we tried conclusions with an Anarchist I got the worst of it. Why did we prosecute Jules Roquet, who edited the Opposition paper ? Simply because he deplored in the interests of science that Elysée Réclus, the geographer, was obliged, for his political opinions, to exile himself from France and live in Switzerland. He naturally enough regretted that such a learned man should be

exiled from his country, and kept on with his old hobby about our all being descended from baboons. For my part I saw nothing dangerous in all this. You can't say that a scientific authority like Réclus is an ignoramus or a fool. However, you and my mother-in-law went at me together; I had to launch a proclamation that the Government would not tolerate seditious language; and of course Roquet fired up and wrote in his next number that I was making a fool of myself, which was undeniable. Why, he and I were old friends; we used to write in the *Cigare* together, and it was an understood thing between us that his ancestor was a frog and mine a tadpole!

"However, after the leader in which he trounced me as I deserved, you and my mother-in-law let loose the public prosecutor on me, and what must I do but have Roquet prosecuted on suspicion of his being an Anarchist! The police searched his diggings for dynamite and found none; the prosecutor distorted those poor articles about Elysée Réclus in hopes of securing a conviction, but what was the result? Why, Roquet was acquitted by the jury, and who looked a fool then? It's true my mother-in-law 'got at' the proprietor of the Opposition journal, and had Roquet dismissed from his editorship, but it did me no good, for Roquet started for Paris, and there he is flinging stones at me every day from the *Intransigeant* and the *Lanterne*, and running me down every afternoon as a noodle at the Café de Suède. So much for shoving one's silly head within reach of a cudgel!"

"Oh, not a silly head, Monsieur le Préfet!" protests M. Vermoulu in a tone of mild remonstrance. "I am sure none ever had a keener head than yourself, and that is why I rely upon you to see the policy of imprisoning one Anarchist or even two Anarchists carried out. If the Anarchists were the stronger party I would not recommend your confining them, but it is a maxim that a statesman who wishes to acquire a character for firmness should look about him for some weak man and make an example of him. Furthermore I would suggest —"

but at this point in his valuable advice the helpful M. Vermoulu is interrupted by a servant with a silver chain over his bosom and black stockings on his calves, who enters to announce M. Bavius Salare, the editor of the prefectural newspaper.

"Ah, eureka!" exclaims M. Tartine, with an ecstatic start. "I have it, Monsieur Vermoulu; and it is a light from heaven itself! I'll show you how to manage troublesome people—bishops, mayors, generals, or tallow-chandlers. I've made such yelp before, and will again, for I'm a ninny to think of prisons while I have the surety of all correctives at command—my pen. Yes; if I am a prefect, Monsieur Vermoulu, I've not ceased to be a journalist—as I'll prove to you. Show in Monsieur Bavius."

M. Bavius walks in cringing, his shrunken soul looking out ashamed from a pair of shifty eyes. From time out of mind he has been the liege-man and bondsman of the prefecture, drawing up "inspired" articles, distorting truth at the orders of his masters, defaming, quibbling, never so happy as when he could dress up a falsehood to deceive poor dupes agape for oracles. For such small nuts as big people threw him he has fawned till his back has grown arched; and he is an impudent fellow, too, who sports a red ribbon at his button-hole, like the dogs at shows who wear a ticket round their necks to explain that they are sold.

Generally speaking, M. Tartine has had no further business with M. Bavius than glancing through his proofs of official decrees, and referring him to M. Vermoulu now and then for cues; but on this occasion he rushes forward, grasps the astonished hireling's hand, and sings out, "We are going to work together this morning, Monsieur Salare. Sit down; you'll lunch here, dine here. I'm not at home to anybody, and we'll prepare such a number for to-morrow as Singebourg has never read. Ah, by my soul! you're going to see me in a new light. What are those in your hands—proofs of leaders? Pitch them into the basket. Nothing mealy-mouthed. No half-utterances to-day. If you've ever heard a whip crack, you'll know what the sound of good

writing is ; lines that whistle round the loins of smooth rogues and take the skin off."

"I do beseech you, Monsieur le Préfet. I entreat you to consider," pleads the venerable M. Vermoulu, seriously disturbed and looking aghast.

"No consideration," retorts M. Tartine fiercely, as he plumps down into his chair and dips his pen into the ink-pot up to the hilt. "The worm turns when his tail is trodden on, and they've been dancing a persistent hornpipe on mine. Here, Monsieur Salare, I've four enemies—the bishop, the general, the mayor, a tallow-chandler, and a lot more. Write down all you know about them, their private lives, aunts, grandmothers, everything that'll make 'em shriek in fact. When you wrote under Gambetta's prefect you must have touched up the bishop before ; do it again, please. And here, Piquemouche, Giffard ! (this to his secretaries in the next room) here's some fun going on ! We're in the *Cigare* office, and there are a bundle of muffs to be roasted. Never mind the public, let them take care of themselves. You, Piquemouche, flay the mayor, and you, Giffard, boil that chandler down till there's nothing of him left. My work will be the general, I know the length of his foot ; the beggar wants to fight, so much the better ; he's knocked at the right door."

"Gracious heavens, he's gone mad !" mutters horror-stricken M. Vermoulu. "Monsieur le Préfet, I adjure you to remember that we are living under a Republican Government, and that constituted authorities are under your protection."

"A fig for constituted authorities !" roars M. Tartine ; "I've never liked 'em, nor the name. If they wanted my protection they should have been civil ; and as to Government, if they won't let me drive the coach in my own way I'll spill it for them, resign, get elected deputy, and vote for suppressing everything and smashing everybody. Piquemouche, just touch the bell and tell the slavey to bring up some claret and cigars ; lots of both. We'll liquor ourselves up to the mark."

"Hey ! not a doubt of it, he's become crazy," shudders M. Vermoulu ; "that comes of putting journalists into responsible situations. I'll call his mother-in-law."

II.—WITH THE CURB.

Now, if M. Tartine hoped to carry on the government of his prefecture by belabouring all his enemies with an official newspaper, he was spared the inglorious crisis which must have resulted from such an experiment by the prompt and very decisive action of the Countess Frailski. Let us be thankful that in these days when women are debarred from so many of the rights which man has usurped, there should still be some who know how to assert what prerogatives they do possess in no doubtful tone ; let us be especially thankful that when we desire to run tilt against a bishop or a general, our mothers-in-law should be so alacrious in blocking up the road and screaming "Back !"

When Madame de Frailski was informed by scared M. Vermoulu, the chief clerk, of what mischief was brewing in her son-in-law's study, she lost not five minutes—indeed, not one minute—in interposing her veto ; and that we may not insist longer on a painful scene, let it be said at once that M. Tartine looked humble enough at the family dinner-table that evening after he had been gravely lectured on his perversity, and was only admitted into favour again on vowing amendment for the future. Of course his young wife had shed tears on hearing that he wished to behave like an infidel ; and Madame de Frailski had remarked that quarrelling with a general was but the first step to surrendering Nancy and all that remained of Lorraine to the German Empire.

M. Tartine protested in dismay that such an intention had never entered his mind—even in nightmare ; but as Madame de Frailski judiciously observed, men are judged by their acts not by their words, and the upshot of the affair was that M. Tartine

surrendered his prefectural functions from that day forth entirely into his mother-in-law's hands. "You see, my dear Timoléon," said that politic lady, as soon as the dessert was on the table, and the servants had left the room, "it is very easy to govern men if you only set about it in the right way. When you first came here you did me the honour to accept my advice on a few occasions, and I think you will recollect that I counselled you safely. Since then I have been unwilling to intrude my opinions unasked, even when I felt that you were following courses that were not quite prudent. But it is positively necessary that you should not quarrel with Government—your own future career as a statesman depends upon it, and so does the happiness of my child."

"Yes, Timoléon," echoes the child in question, looking very pretty, as usual, in a simple dress costing less than forty guineas; "I can never be happy again if you quarrel with anybody."

"Oh, I won't quarrel," answers M. Tartine, with meekness, as he resignedly sips his wine; "imprison every one and have somebody shot if you like. If I am not allowed to tackle my enemies with a pen, I am no match for them, and I give in."

"You shall be more than a match for them," responds Madame de Frailski, graciously; "it is a mere question of governing paternally."

It is a truth that there are two ways of ruling a population, and both are equally good, though they lead to opposite results. If you come as prefect into a city where there are several factions tugging each other by the ears, it is a very plain matter to let them settle their differences as they please, so long as they don't do it in the public thoroughfares and disturb the cabs. The other way is to put your finger into every pie, open every cupboard, peep down every cellar, insert your hand between tree and bark whenever they get apart, and never hear of a row without rushing into it, and getting your share of blows from one or both combatants. M. Tartine liked the former method; his mother-in-law much preferred the latter.

To M. Tartine it was an incomprehensible thing that Government should care a rush whether a man traced his ancestry up to Adam or up to a newt splashing in the marshes whereon Paris now stands. He cared nothing whether a man wore a black hat or a red nightcap, dated his letters the 21st of September or 1st Vendémiaire, addressed him as "Citoyen" (a term which has little sense in it if you live in the country), or as "Monsieur" (an appellation which has no sense at all whether you live in country or in town, seeing that "sieurs," who were feudal lords, have gone out of date, like culverins). Least of all did it signify to M. Tartine whether he drew the King's pay, that of the Emperor, or handed his acknowledgments for salaries received to the Republic one and indivisible : but as other people think it worth while to wax warm over these trifles, it followed, as a result of M. Tartine's pococouranteism, that not only did Radical town-councillors, journalists, and other loose people, take a great deal more tether than they were accustomed to, but the bishop, the general, and that representative of Singebourg's trade, the tallow-chandler, blazed out in unexpected directions, as we have seen, and gave trouble.

Now, in Madame de Frailski's scheme of government there was to be but one will, and that hers. Just as she would have been shocked that any male connection of her own, husband, son-in-law, or what not, should wear gloves of a colour that displeased her, so she had little notion of allowing a subject people to hold any other opinions but those laid down for them by their masters. She would have had the populations be happy and dance, but dance under laws and regulations ; be decent and civil, and hold their tongues when told to be silent. As to journalists, Royalist and Radical orators, and persons who made themselves unpleasant generally, they were no more to be endured than uncouth people who were rude in a lady's drawing-room ; and here let it be explained that if M. Tartine's mother-in-law objected to Royalists and advanced Radicals, it was not because they sported this colour or that other, but because their colour was not the right one as

times went. It was all a question to be settled like the fashions. People don't wear patches and farthingales now, so why should they be reactionary or revolutionary when the Government is an Opportunist one? That is what M. Tartine's mother-in-law wanted to know.

With these principles to guide her, it may well be conceived that Madame de Frailski was not long in fair possession of her son-in-law's power before she let it be seen in Singebourg that a firm hand had got hold of the helm. There is no saying whether this was a pleasant or an unpleasant change to the townsfolk, but certainly a good number of people began to think that they had possibly misjudged M. Tartine; and one of the first to arrive at this conclusion was our friend the bishop, who was a worthy soul, well-meaning enough when not over-clated from thinking of his lilac stockings.

Motioning him to a seat beside her one evening, Madame de Frailski said, smiling as she fluttered her fan: "That was a very vigorous pastoral you issued the other day, my lord; but I suppose it will be the last?"

"Oh, no!" answered the poor bishop naïvely, for he was truly thinking of writing another much more vigorous than the first, and was only hesitating about the cost of printing, his salary being six hundred pounds a year.

"Oh, but I am *sure* it will be the last," rejoined Madame de Frailski coaxingly. "You see, Government much want to live on peaceful terms with the Church, but you must let us manage matters in our own way. Suppose you bring the proofs of your next pastoral to *me*?" And the bishop thereupon went home with a vague sort of idea that if he did not do as he was requested the consequences might be unsatisfactory, and take, perhaps, some such unpleasant form as a suspension of salary.

As to the general, who had a tiff with M. Tartine, he was, of course, playing sulky, and would not come to the prefecture; but Madame de Frailski accosted him in a neutral house, and

after a clever word or two of apology on M. Tartine's behalf, added, "But the truth is, general, you are too gallant a soldier to be cooped up in a little town like this. You ought to be given a command in Africa—sent, for instance, to punish that extremely ferocious tribe—what is the name of it?—that has just rebelled against the tax-gatherers."

Now, this was a very perfidious compliment, and not at all soothing to the general, who had campaigned in Africa half his life, and had had far more than enough of ferocious tribes, let alone tax-gatherers. Suspecting that it might be the prefect's purpose to recommend him for Algerian service, he pulled the wryest of faces, and from that day M. Tartine counted no courtier more smirking, no guest so regular in his attendance at the prefectural dinner-table, no admirer of his jokes so enthusiastic as this headstrong officer, who had seemed inclined to be bumptious until he had felt the strong hand of a woman on him.

The Radical mayor had now to be disposed of, and as he had the reputation of being a most uncompromising politician, Madame de Frailski brought all her diplomacy into play. She let him understand that although the Government was mainly composed of Opportunists it was anxious to secure the support of Republicans of all shades of opinion, and moreover that it was quite prepared to reward merit when the occasion offered and sink all political divergencies. A skilful little allusion to the Legion of Honour followed, with an expression of surprise that such an important functionary as the mayor of Singebourg was not decorated. The Government, said the Countess, was anxious to go ahead and realise every possible reform, but for the moment the situation of the country made peace and tranquillity highly desirable, and if the Municipal Council only exercised a little patience and adjourned its petitions for revising the Constitution, and suppressing the Senate, why the Government would feel grateful, and, who knows, on Prefect Tartine's recommendation a strip of scarlet ribbon would no doubt some

day be sent from the Ministry of the Interior to adorn the button-hole of M. le Maire's frock-coat.

Uncompromising as the mayor may have been, he was not proof against such a bait as this; and we are happy to record that of recent times, under his judicious control, the Municipal Council of Singebourg has become most moderate-minded and unobtrusive.

However, it was necessary that the prefect's authority should make itself felt in some direction or other, and after due reflection the Countess Frailski decided that the Royalist club of Singebourg, where all the local nobility assembled to kill time in card-playing and gossiping, should be closed by decree, on the ground that it was a hotbed of conspiracy against the constituted government of France. This measure, however, was really adopted because several old aristocratic families had declared in a spirit of pure envy, that a Montenegrin countship was less than nothing, and had even questioned the right of Madame Tartine to style herself Comtesse de Tartine de Pain-bœurré on her visiting cards.

Now a snub from a pack of provincial *hobereaux* was more than either Madame de Frailski or Madame Tartine could stand, and so the "Cercle de la Noblesse" was closed. The Government had long wished to take this step, but had been unable to do so till formally advised by the prefect, whose counsels would cover their responsibility; so M. Tartine got praise in high quarters, and the Ministry of the Interior was joyous, which proves once again that there is nothing like making things pleasant all round.

As to the tallow-chandler, it was another matter. You can suppress an obnoxious club, but you cannot extinguish a chandler who sends out ten millions of candles every year to lighten the public darkness, and is besides a fat man allied to a Cabinet Minister's god-mother. So you make friends with him. Madame de Frailski asked the chandler why he did not apply his luminous faculties to politics, which flattered him; and she rescinded the contract which had been bestowed on the other chandler whose

relative had studied under the Jesuits. All the public offices, asylums, &c., under M. Tartine's sway were illumined with candles which spluttered, were in every way worse, and naturally much dearer than those of the Jesuit man's. But, on the other hand, the whilom angry chandler became a faithful mainstay of Opportunist principles ; and fidelity, as we all must avouch, is a virtue for which one cannot pay too high a price.

Now, let us be candid, and setting aside all differences of opinion, ask which of these two systems of government is the best—M. Tartine's, or his mother-in-law's ? Assuredly the mother-in-law's. Under M. Tartine the people of Singebourg were possibly free, but they wrangled and were not happy ; under Madame de Frailski they ran in harness, they felt the curb, and the whip was not spared ; but Frenchmen love the whip, and the Singebourgeois said one to another, " Monsieur Tartine est un rude préfet." Other people repeated this eulogy, and thus it has come to pass that, having never of his own free will bullied a soul, M. Tartine has acquired that—to a statesman—most enviable reputation of clashing the heads of his contemporaries together like ninepins. He is dreaded and even liked. If he were to die to-morrow he would be treated to a column's biography in the papers ; if he had departed this life three months ago he would have been honoured with a ten-line paragraph. From all which it is possible to derive a new moral : Let us love, honour, and obey our mothers-in-law.

M. TARTINE'S HOLIDAY TOUR.

I.—HE STARTS.

Too busy as a journalist to be slothful as a prefect, M. Tartine has been making the town under his rule very hot for him. Some contend that this is not his fault, but that of his mother-in-law, who virtually governs Singebourg in his name; but others retort that to cloak oneself behind a mother-in-law argues a pusillanimity which should incapacitate a man from holding high official station. However that may be, M. Tartine, feeling himself to be unpopular among his *administrés*, lately bethought him that a few weeks' holiday would do him good. He had been turning the official grindstone for two years without cessation, and had a fair right to claim a little relaxation. He claimed it, obtained the month's leave he desired, and prudently made up his mind that the relaxation would be greater if he could set off alone, for his wife's company would entail his mother-in-law's. His natural sociability led him, however, to look for a companion, and he found one in the person of an old journalistic comrade, M. Victor Mistifi, who forthwith proposed that the two should do their excursions on foot.

A perfect start on a walking tour, with a knapsack on his back, gaiters on his legs, and a knotty staff in his hand! The suggestion was a little startling, for placemen soon grow accustomed to the wear of uniform, and derive stiffness therefrom. Mistifi, knowing this, laughed at his friend's disconcerted countenance; but, being a jocular fellow, with a pleasing trick of making merry at others' expense, he sketched a costume which happily

combined all the attributes of the prefect with those of the tourist, and consisted of a brown corduroy swallow-tail, a grey felt cocked hat, and a knapsack adorned with the portrait of President Grévy and the enscribed device "*Vive la République !*"

M. Tartine, however, decided that he should feel more comfortable in an ordinary shooting suit ; but, to the end that he might not lessen his prestige by gadding about his own Department thus unceremoniously clothed, he moved for a tour along the Bonmar coast, which could be prefaced by doing the distance between Singebourg and Le Tréport—100 miles or so—by rail. M. Mistifi consented, for, according to him, the only charm of a walking tour was to travel within vehicles as often as possible ; for instance, when the road was long, or dusty, or unpicturesque ; when the sun was hot, when the sky threatened rain, or when the inns along the way afforded no enticing certainties in the matter of beds and cookery.

M. Mistifi was too much of a Parisian not to love his ease, and not to be above the vanity of seeking to fortify the muscles of his legs by undue exercise. A breezy little man, not much taller than a turkeycock on tiptoe, he possessed a fund of infinite jest, anecdote, and song, and loved to frequent the popular haunts of men in order that these gifts might have fair play and be admired. For the beauties of scenery he cared naught, except in so far as they brought crowds together ; and of persons who lived wholly in the country he was wont to say, with a pitying shrug, that they surrendered all the benefits of civilisation, seeing that playhouses, boulevards, and cafés are alike unknown to those who follow rural pursuits. M. Mistifi's ideal of existence was to live in Paris ; and if he went a-touring now and then, it was only that he might find his favourite city all the fairer and pleasanter when he got back.

In all these respects Tartine was his sworn brother ; and the two had scarcely climbed into the Paris train together before the prefect confided to the journalist that two years had reduced him to the intellectual condition of the oyster. "Why not spend a

week in Paris, then?" proposed M. Mistifi, whose appetite for the tour had been slightly blunted by the seven days he had been passing in his friend's prefectural town. M. Tartine thought this arrangement would suit him perfectly. Paris lay midway between Singebourg and Le Tréport, and M. Tartine was under orders to remain there at least one day in order to execute sundry commissions for the ladies of his household. "By prudent management one day may be made to include seven," remarked M. Mistifi, and he kindly instructed the prefect as to how the latter might copy pages out of the guide-book descriptive of the beauties of Le Tréport, and forward the same to his wife through the intermediary of a friend of his—Mistifi's—who lived in that Norman watering town.

One must suppose that there really is in the atmosphere of Paris some attraction which operates magnetically on those who once have tasted it; for when M. Tartine found himself on his ever-beloved Boulevard, and looked forward to the possibility of returning there every day for a week, he was as nearly as possible moved to sentimentalise. Not that he had been actually bereaved of Paris for two whole years, for he had more than once travelled thither on the occasion of Ministerial changes, when he had to take his orders from new incomers at the Ministry of the Interior; but what dismal visits these, which had to be passed in official interviews, receptions, and dinners! Here, incog., full master of his time, and with the Minister ignorant of his very whereabouts, he was a free man again. The iron chair on which he sat outside of Tortoni's seemed soft as a velvet cushion to him, the opal absinthe in his glass had a perfume recalling hosts of cheerful memories, and through the blue spirals of his cigar he saw the faces of old friends who stopped in their saunters to greet him with extended hands and laughing lips.

Why did they laugh? They told him he had fattened, that his hair was thinning away at the top, that his features had got starched—and he laughed, too, a little wryly at first, but more cordially by-and-by, when he began to notice that his old friends

had fattened, too, grown bald, &c., though they themselves appeared to be ignorant of the fact. There was soon a fine gathering of old cronies round the marble tables of the pleasant café, and by M. Mistifi it was moved, *nem. con.*, that such genial company ought not and should not part without a dinner at Brébant's, a flying visit to various green-rooms, an hour at Mabilie, and a midnight supper at the Café Anglais.

The programme was performed to the letter: but now see what it is to be a prefect and to be blessed with journalistic friends who have more regard for the humours of life than respect for authority. While M. Tartine dined and supped, joked with actresses and fancied himself a festive bachelor again, his friend Mistifi was brooding over the dark thought of putting all these escapades into print. Whether M. Tartine, exhilarated by good wines, let slip any State secrets, or expressed himself too frankly about the Opportunist system of government, or recounted too graphically what miseries he endured at the hands of his mother-in-law, there is no saying; but it is certain that the other journalists promptly caught the wink which Mistifi conveyed to them, and entered into the scheme for roasting their placeman. So when M. Tartine returned, gay and tired, to his hotel at about two in the morning his friends slunk off like writers, as they were, to their respective newspaper offices, and there indited some of those delightful paragraphs which are at once the pride and the special prerogative of Parisian journalism.

When M. Tartine rose and sat down to breakfast at mid-day, he had the satisfaction of seeing his arrival announced, and the account of his evening's amusement minutely chronicled, in half-a-dozen of the most widely circulated journals of his country. He was furthermore credited with two immoral anecdotes, with affectionate intentions towards a ballet-dancer, with irreverent jokes about President Grévy and M. Wilson, and with three tart witticisms about his mother-in-law. All this may explain why our unfortunate friend—pale in the face and with hair on end—decided that he would not spend seven days, nor even seven hours

more, in Paris, but set off for the St. Lazare station the moment breakfast was over, his good comrade Mistifi accompanying him, of course, and anathematizing in louder terms than himself the vulgar personalities to which the press of France is nowadays addicted.

II.—A SEA BATH.

MOST people who start for Le Tréport linger at Dieppe, for the reason that the former town can only be reached from Paris by passing through the latter. A little branch of rail between Dieppe and its small sister would be a great boon to bathers, and develop Le Tréport's prosperity; but as things go you must take the diligence and undergo a three hours' oscillation along the most unsightly bit of road that ever defied description.

M. Tartine and his friend M. Mistifi having arrived at Dieppe in the evening towards the hour when men hunger for dinner, the journalist humorously suggested that they should begin their walking tour at once by starting for Le Tréport on foot there and then, for, as a thin drizzle was falling, and the roads were knee-deep in mud, they would get inured at one stroke to all the hardships which pedestrianism might have in store for them. M. Tartine declined; but, being still sore from the joke played upon him by the Parisian newspaper men, he evinced an objection to putting up at any of the fashionable hotels in the new quarter of the town where he might fall in with other kind friends. He suggested an hotel on the good old Quai Henri IV.; and M. Mistifi agreed, for it was one and all to him where he lodged at night, providing the daytime was spent in pleasant companionship.

While dinner was preparing, however, M. Mistifi thought good to draft a form of contract for the regulating of mutual relations thenceforward, and this is what he wrote:—"Clause I. The high contracting parties to this agreement shall perform all their wan-

derings on foot, except when they may find it expedient to do otherwise. II. They shall contrive to be of one mind about the places to be visited ; the amusements to be indulged in, and the things to be eaten. III. Should any differences arise as to the construction of clauses specified or not specified in this agreement, each party shall retain his own opinion modestly but firmly, and the dispute shall be settled by tossing up."

It was a glorious day of sunshine when the two friends awoke on the morrow, and from the windows of their bedrooms they beheld a more picturesque scene than any to be had in the new town. Below them the quays, with its swarms of sailors, fishermen and fisherwomen, companies of red-trousered soldiers returning from early drill on the downs, and travellers, just disembarked from the Newhaven packet, hurrying and being jostled through the small custom-house. Beyond this, the harbour with its fleet of ships which carry coals from and potatoes to England ; the two long piers, each adorned with a colossal crucifix ; then, right away over the harbour, the ancient town of Le Pollais, glinting in an opal haze, and to the left, beyond the lighthouse, the sea with its blue waves all glistening.

M. Mistifi, perceiving all these things, thought how foolish it would be to go tramping along roads which could not have had time to dry, when, by postponing departure till the starting of the evening diligence, an agreeable day could be spent at the "Etablissement des Bains." M. Tartine, availing himself of Clause III., stuck firmly to the opinion that an immediate start would be preferable ; but, by virtue of the same clause, M. Mistifi produced a ten-sou piece, tossed it in the air, and condemned the prefect to follow him for that day, at least, whithersoever he listed.

Now, the "Etablissement," or Casino, is not at all the proper place for a man who wants to ruralize in incognito. It is resorted to by crowds, who are the essence of all that is distinguished in Paris. It has its concert and ball-room, billiard-room, card-room where brisk *écarté* is played all day, and a grand terrace perp

tually, haunted by the reporters of a local gazette printed on pink paper, which publishes the names of notable visitors, and records the good things they are supposed to say. M. Tartine had no sooner set foot on the terrace, clad in an unexceptionable tourist's suit and red-striped shirt, than he was booked by one of the reporters as "the witty Prefect of Singebourg, whose amusing jocularities our Parisian contemporaries have lately been relating." A second step made him encounter a bevy of actresses, to whom he bowed, and who winked at him. A third step landed him almost into the arms of his chief, the Minister of the Interior in person, who frowned—such a frown!

"I thought you were in Paris, Monsieur Tartine," said his Excellency, in a freezing voice that spoke volumes.

M. Tartine bowed, and had presence of mind enough to notice Madame la Ministre and several of her offspring with her, so he bowed again.

The Minister, in nowise relenting, resumed: "I had the surprise to read some strange things attributed to you in the Parisian prints, and you were the subject of a telegram which I yesterday addressed to Paris, begging that you might be summoned to the Ministry to give an account as to whether those sayings are true."

"They are not true," gasped M. Tartine; "it was a base joke played off on me by some old newspaper friends."

"You should avoid the society of journalists, M. Tartine," was the Minister's stern reply; but here M. Mistifi tugging at Tartine's coat-skirt, the latter was very reluctantly compelled to acknowledge and introduce him. "My friend, Victor Mistifi, of the *Cigare*," he stammered.

"A great admirer of our Governments and Ministers, but especially of fallen ones," added the gentleman in question, nothing daunted.

It was now the Minister's turn to bow and smile; but the smile was, as the contraction of lips under the smart of lemon-juice. M. Mistifi would have done well to retire after his intro-

duction ; but, to M. Tartine's horror, he showed a disposition to anchor alongside the man in power, and asked him affably whether he were not going to bathe. Before the Minister could reply, his wife intervened for him very graciously with an affirmative.

"Well, then, we will all three go and bathe together," remarked M. Mistifi in the most matter-of-fact tone ; and such is the prestige of assurance that his Excellency soon found himself stepping towards the shingle in the society of a man whose principles on every question of politics and morals he profoundly distrusted.

And now pray form an idea of the scene conjured up by these words, "French bathing." It is not the semi-private affair contrived in England by the aid of a lumbering machine on wheels drawn down into the sea by a white horse. Englishmen duck into the waves and slink out therefrom as if they were half ashamed of what they did ; a Frenchman marches proudly over a hundred yards of plank, with a thousand pairs of eyes scrutinizing his athletic proportions from the terrace above. It is the usual thing, and there was nothing strange, therefore, in the sight of a Minister, a prefect, and a versatile writer emerging from three adjoining machines, most concisely clad and trooping in Indian file towards the waves. The Minister kept his spectacles on, and M. Tartine acutely felt the honour of being admitted to share the ablutions of a man from whose inherent majestickness the absence of garments detracted nothing.

As for M. Mistifi, he hopped to the front, and, having reached the water's edge, caught a bucket out of the hands of one of the bathers and said courteously : "It is the fashion to have one's head immersed first ; allow me to recommend to your Excellency, as a sovereign bracer, a bucket of water shot lightly in the small of the back," and without more ado he sped two gallons of salt water vigorously upon the statesman's waist, causing the latter to lurch forward and pant. Then, by another quick movement, he refilled the bucket, and poured its contents with a most dexterous jerk

over the ministerial pate. These delicate attentions having left his Excellency breathless, M. Mistifi affectionately hustled him towards the sea, inquiring whether he could swim.

"No-o," stammered the Minister, as a wave broke at his feet and whirled a great vortex of water round him.

"Then Tartine and I can, and you have only to give us each a hand, and we will bear you up beautifully—there—softly—don't be alarmed or struggle—that's it;" and by this time the mainstay of France's Government was floundering out of his depth.

"I do beg of you, gentlemen—" he protested, in anguish.

"Keep quite cool and lift up your chin," interrupted M. Mistifi, striking out with his left arm. "Isn't it nice? But, do you know, I take a higher view of bathing than that of the mere pleasure it causes. The rough buoyancy and tumult of these waves reminds me of the turbulence of factions, amid which a statesman like yourself is compelled to steer his way. If you were left to face these waves alone" (here he let go the Minister's wrist)—"I beg pardon; your head got under water—but that illustrates what I was going to say, for if you were not supported by a devoted press, and by a vigorous body of administrators like my friend Tartine, what would become of you? You were pleased half an hour ago to express an opinion that journalists —"

"I have always—es-esteemed the p-press," faltered the Minister with his mouth full of water.

"And you are quite right, for, after helping you breast the waves, it will, if you are docile, land you on firm earth again, as I have just done. There, évohé! touch the ground."

An hour later his Excellency was declaring everywhere that M. Mistifi had given him an admirable lesson in natation and philosophy; and thus it was that the journalist reconciled his friend M. Tartine with the Government, which he had unwittingly offended.

III.—DIEPPE.

"THE friendship of a great man is a blessing from heaven," says Corneille. That must depend on the great man's character and conduct. M. Tartine could have dispensed with the divine blessing which consisted in sending him the Minister of the Interior as a companion at Dieppe, and he took an early opportunity of avoiding that exalted personage. He would even have left Dieppe, but for the irrepressible sociableness of M. Mistifi, which led the latter to conclude engagements for excursions with all sorts of persons whom neither he nor M. Tartine had ever seen before. The man seemed to pick up friends on the beach as others do seaweed—and what friends! His predilections always fastened on men whom some moral or physical peculiarity distinguished from their fellows, and he called this studying character. But whereas ordinary students of human nature take months and years to read a character aright, M. Mistifi completed his psychological researches in a few minutes, and then passed on his "subjects" to M. Tartine, with whispered instructions to get rid of them as best he could.

In the course of an afternoon the Prefect of Singebourg saw thus palmed off on him—1, a retired general who carried about in his pockets the proof of a work on field tactics, which he insisted on reading to casual acquaintances; 2, an inventor who wished to utilize the motive power of the sea-waves to manufacture meerschaum pipes; and, 3, a Swedish spiritualist, with a head like Paganini's, and a voice which seemed to come out of a cavern. M. Tartine's mild temper rebelled at last when Mistifi brought him a whole Irish family, consisting of a deaf justice of the peace, his wife, a cub of a son aged twelve, and a blooming daughter of eighteen, "Mees Kate," whom it was evidently her parents' wish to marry to some foreign grandee.

M. Tartine could have brooked the society of Miss Kate, but Mistifi naturally wished to keep this young lady to himself, while

his friend diverted the father, mother, and cub; and hereat M. Tartine entered a feeling protest, vowing he would start alone for Le Tréport that very evening. Mistifi answered by tossing a five-franc piece thrice in the air, and, having won each time, declared that by the articles of partnership both himself and his friend were bound to stay in Dieppe three days longer. He supplemented this intelligence by announcing that he had arranged with the Irish family for a picnic at the Château d'Arques on the morrow, and had invited the Swedish spiritualist to enliven the party.

It may be here inquired wherefore men who would not be seen riding on donkey-back along the Boulevards in Paris for any sum one could name will prefer donkeys to any other mounts for visiting places of interest at the seaside. The answer that a man may pass unknown and unnoticed at the seaside will not hold water; for it is in Paris, on the contrary, that the generality of men may pass unknown and unnoticed—so much so that a State dignitary who should mount a donkey at the Bastille and trot him in a leisurely way towards the Madeleine would assuredly be mistaken by the majority of passers-by for a market gardener. It is true that such few persons as recognized him would think he had gone mad; but why should he be thought less mad if found bestriding an ass at Dieppe, where nine-tenths of the people he meets know his name and position?

“Custom,” is the reply. But why is it customary to do such unusual things under pretence that one is residing on the sea-coast? Why should a man sport a strange hat with a blue veil, carry a buff parasol, and wear canvas shoes with plaited soles? Why should he buy ivories which he does not want, and polished pebbles which will be an encumbrance to him for the rest of his days? Why should he play fast and furiously for uncatable macaroons at the insipid game of Dutch-top, and gamble away napoleons incautiously at *écarté* in the card-room with men whom he has never seen—and would not care to see—elsewhere? Why, in fine, should a man who is most guarded as to the society which

he frequents and allows his family to frequent in Paris—plunge recklessly with his daughters into the Saturday balls at the establishment of hot baths, and into the bazaars, concerts, and other merry-makings at the establishment of cold ones?

M. Mistifi's explanation is that, social restraints having become too arbitrary and numerous, man lives in a chronic state of sullen rebellion against them, and that he gladly seizes upon any occasion of overtly showing his rebellion. Thus the nondescript gear of sea-bathers is but a protest against the chimney-pot hat and black coat of civilization, just as the promiscuous familiarity of casinos is an outspoken challenge to men to be more brotherly and less addicted to examining one another's antecedents than is the case in inland cities. "Were it not for the seaside," added M. Mistifi philosophically, "men's minds would be encrusted within conventional ideas, each man being cognizant only of the manners and morals of his own class and ignorant of those of the classes above and below him." Thus, how could the Minister of the Interior have ever learned anything as to the manner in which young men of family are ruined by *demi-mondaines*, if he had not seen Mademoiselle Peaudesatin dance a *caneau* at the Casino in a diamond tiara, and refresh herself afterwards by drinking champagne out of a tankard? And how could he ever have grasped the undesirability of reviving public gambling tables, had not he been tempted in a festive moment to risk five louis at *écarté* against an affable but unknown stranger, who turned up the king at five deals in succession?

However this may be, MM. Mistin and Tartine, the Irish family, and the Swedish spiritualist started for the Château d'Arques on donkeys, with five ragged urchins hooting after them all the way, which was four miles or so. Arques is famous for a victory gained by Henri IV. over the Leaguers, and in a lesser way for a ghost who is supposed to haunt the ruined castle, and whom the Swedish spiritualist tried to evoke while M. Mistifi and the pretty Irish girl were laying the cloth for luncheon on the velvety sward of the ancient banqueting room.

It is always worth while to follow up a ghost ; and M. Tartine, accompanied by the Irish justice of the peace, followed the Swede up the dilapidated staircase of the tower, while the Irish boy, a trifle sceptical maybe, dived into some ivy and disappeared from view. A few minutes afterwards some faint knocks were heard, and the Swede's brow became radiant. "The ghost !" he muttered ; "and he announces his willingness to converse with us."

M. Tartine felt as though his hair, suddenly risen on end, were lifting his hat off his head. "I don't believe in ghosts," he faltered ; "and I am sure Monsieur here is of my opinion ?"

"I agree with you that the character of the Corsicans is impulsive—but what of that ?" bellowed the deaf Irishman, who for the past hour had been drawing a parallel between Erin and the island of the Bonapartes with a view to demonstrating the remedial utility of Home Rule for both of them.

The knocks continued ; and the Swede, fishing an alphabet and a pencil from his pocket, howled in an ecstatic voice that if there were any spirits present they would reveal themselves by rapping answers as he read out his alphabet. The raps became forthwith so numerous that M. Tartine slunk behind a mound of stones, while the spiritualist noted down with infinite complacency, as the reply to his first question, the word "gammon." "Gammon !" he exclaimed musingly, "that is clearly an abbreviation for Gramont, and must mean that the Duc de Gramont, who was Foreign Minister in 1870, is responsible for France's disasters. And yet, stay, it possibly signifies that the Duke will soon be at the head of affairs again. If this be the correct interpretation, knock several times, spirit !"

A loud succession of knocks testified to the sagacity of the Swede, who modestly remarked, "Intuition has become a second nature with me. We will inquire now what will happen to France when the Duke is Minister again ? These political questions must interest you, Monsieur Tartine ?"

"Not in the least, I assure you," rejoined the Prefect of Singe-

bourg ; " I hate politics, always did, and always shall ; and not the less so since ghosts begin to mix themselves up with it ! "

" Politics ! " shouted the Irish justice of the peace, who caught a stray word now and then, and fancied the French prefect was arguing with him ; " politics, I tell ye, is all summed up in Home Rule ! Give Home Rule to the Corsicans and the Irish, the two most patriotic peoples under heaven, and what will ye see as the result ? "

By this time the spirit had rapped out the word " Bosh ! " and the Swedish spiritualist was placing a luminous construction on this, to him, foreign monosyllable : " ' Bosh ' is evidently an abbreviation for ' Bocher,' the name of the distinguished gentleman who heads the Orleanist party ; and I must take it that after France has been once more ruined by the Duc de Gramont, she will be saved by the financial ability of Monsieur Bocher, acting as Premier to Louis Philippe II. Am I right, spirit ? "

Here the voice of Miss Kate being heard crying, "*Le dejoinay ay pray, Mossoos !*" the Irish cub decamped from the ivy in the direction of the refreshments ; and probably the ghost, being athirst, glided after him, for he declined answering any more questions. The Swede, nothing daunted, however, made a pious entry of the words " Gammon " and " Bosh " in his note-book, and placed them abruptly under the eyes of the Irish justice of the peace just as the latter was finishing, for M. Tartine's benefit, his panegyric on Home Rule.

There is no knowing what would have ensued had not M. Mistifi at this moment sportively caught the Irishman round the waist and waltzed him towards a chicken salad ; whilst at the same time he cried, casting a look of intelligence at Miss Kate, " Good news, Tartine ; we start for Étretat, Trouville, and all the other places to-morrow, and our eminent and amiable friends the Esquire O'Leary and his family accompany us ! "

IV.—AN ADVENTURE.

THE idea of travelling in company of the Esquire O'Leary and his family was so distasteful to M. Tartine that he resolved on giving his friend Mistifi the go-by. After all, this man of letters was a bore, with his eternal hankerings after crowds, his chance acquaintances, and his continual suggestions to do things to which M. Tartine objected. The Prefect of Singebourg brooded over many projects of desertion as he lunched on the sward of the Château d'Arques, and at last he hit upon the simple expedient of decamping early the next morning, before M. Mistifi was out of bed. M. Mistifi would storm horribly when he awoke, and he would perhaps go in pursuit of M. Tartine; but M. Tartine would levant in the direction of Le Tréport, whereas it was probable that M. Mistifi, in order not to separate himself from Miss Kate, would hurry off west towards Fécamp.

When a man meditates playing an evil turn to a friend he pretences by lavishing extra civility on his victim; and M. Mistifi's suspicions ought to have been aroused by M. Tartine's extraordinary affability during the picnic, by his accommodating sociability towards the Esquire O'Leary on the way home, and by the quietly forcible grasp of the hand wherewith he favoured M. Mistifi when the two parted for the night. But M. Mistifi suspected nothing. He went soundly to sleep in room No. 5, and out of room No. 7, just as the dawn was breaking, M. Tartine guiltily issued with his carpet-bag. He had paid his bill the night before, and had written a short affectionate note, apprising Mistifi that their touring connection must cease, owing to incompatibility of tastes. This note he slipped, in passing, under M. Mistifi's door, after putting his ear to the keyhole to assure himself by his friend's sonorous breathing that the latter was truly asleep.

Six o'clock was striking from all the town clocks as M. Tartine slunk along the quay in the direction of the diligence office. He

was just in time to catch the conveyance. Quick ! a ticket !—but the *coupe* was engaged and the inside was full : there was nothing for it but to climb on the *impériale*, or hooded seat behind the box, where an uncomfortable stranger, closely muffled, was already ensconced. There is nothing neat or clean about these diligences, and an Englishman will always wonder wherefore Frenchmen should have so little pride in their public vehicles as to turn out traps which look like superannuated omnibuses. This one was drawn by three white, flea-bitten horses, whose tails were tied up with straw and whose harness was mended with rope. The coachman wore a blue blouse and a fur cap, and, instead of ascending nimbly to his box and catching up his reins with a knowing air of satisfaction in what he did, he climbed up lazily as if he were asleep. However, the diligence started at a fair jog trot, and that was the main point to M. Tartine, who heaved a sigh of relief as a turn in the road hid Dieppe from view.

“Do you object to smoking ?” asked his uncomfortable neighbour from the recesses of his muffler.

“No,” answered M. Tartine civilly, and he would have stopped there, but that something in the stranger’s voice seemed familiar to him and caused him to stare. The two recognized each other simultaneously, and M. Tartine muttered the name of Bravachon,—one of the departmental deputies, whom he had often seen in Paris.

“Hush !” whispered M. Bravachon, laying a finger on his lips and jerking a thumb towards the coachman. “Hush ! I am travelling incognito !”

“Have you committed a murder ?” inquired M. Tartine, playfully.

“I’m, something like it,” confessed the deputy. “I appear to have murdered the confidence of my constituents, and they talk of nothing but unseating me at the next elections !”

“That’s a bad business,” said M. Tartine : “but if it will relieve you, pray unbosom yourself.”

M. Bravachon did unbosom himself. The road was dusty, the landscape unsightly, and the coachman looked so profoundly asleep that the deputy was moved to relate his grievances and ask for consolation. "I have come down here on business," he began in a contrite voice, "and you can't think how distasteful to me it would be to meet any of my constituents, for they would question me about the promises I made them when I was canvassing their votes, and what could I say to them in answer? When a man canvasses he must naturally make promises; but he is the slave of circumstances, and he is often surprised to find how few of his pledges he can redeem!"

"Hadn't you better tell your constituents that straightforwardly?" suggested M. Tartine.

"Oh, no! they would pelt me with beetroots," answered the deputy. "My only chance is that if I keep away they may judge me by my public speeches, which are fine enough——"

"I will take your word for that," said M. Tartine, politely.

"You see there is a stupid proverb which says, '*Les absents ont toujours tort*,'" resumed the deputy. "Nothing can be less true, for when a man has nothing good to say, he had much better stay away. Just fancy my plight if I were standing amidst a group of infuriated electors, who asked me why I had voted with the fellows of the 'Union Républicaine' when I had been returned on purpose to strengthen the 'Extrême Gauche.' The fact is that, in a weak moment, I gave myself out as a Radical——"

"But on arriving in Paris you discovered that snug Government posts for relations and friends were only to be had by voting with the Opportunists——"

"How do you know that?" inquired the deputy.

"You forget that I am a prefect," replied M. Tartine; and hereon the pair nudged each other, laughing.

They soon became fast friends. The road grew more and more dusty, the unsightliness of the landscape increased rather than diminished as they proceeded, and the somnolency of the coach-

man took such a heavy, nodding turn that it looked as if he would topple off the box on to the backs of his slow-going team. But the deputy and the prefect found the journey pleasant enough, as they exchanged confidences about their professional tribulations ; and in the end M. Bravachon invited M. Tartine to put up at his house, which was half-way on the road to Le Tréport, and a most cheerful place, surrounded by a park with a lake in it, where one might bathe and fish.

M. Tartine accepted : " After all," cried he with amicable enthusiasm, " you are right and your constituents are wrong. What should they want more liberty for ? Isn't a country free enough when its citizens can transact their business, amuse themselves, or travel about as we are doing without being molested by any man ? "

" That's what I always say," rejoined the deputy. " But the diligence changes horses here, and we can do the rest of our way on foot. Let us get down and crack a bottle of wine at the post-house."

They alighted, and while the other passengers followed suit, called for refreshments. M. Tartine raised a glass of red wine to his lips, and recommenced his eulogy of French liberties. But he had not got far before he was attracted by two clouds of dust rising on the road, and in the distance a couple of mounted gendarmes were seen spurring vigorously and making a loud clatter with their clinking scabbards. All the passengers strained their eyes, for the pace of these gendarmes was unusual, and betokened that they were in quest of somebody.

They were truly in quest of M. Tartine. Reining in opposite the post-house, both gendarmes scanned all the travellers with a searching eye ; then one of them, suddenly pointing to M. Tartine, exclaimed, " That's he ! Hie there ! I arrest you in the name of the law for an escaped Anarchist. You are Brûlot ! I recognize you spite of your disguise ! "

" Come, come, if this be a joke, it's a bad one," cried M. Tartine, stepping back.

"It's no joke, as you'll find," shouted the gendarme, stuffing his gauntlet within his yellow baldric, and feeling in his pocket for some handcuffs.

M. Tartine would have liked to fly, but the passengers, the postmaster, the ostlers, and a few casual bumpkins had closed round him in a circle. Theoretically, the impulse of Frenchmen is to take part against the representatives of public order whenever a supposed criminal is arrested, but, practically, they assist in apprehending the criminal for fear of consequences. It was thus that a peasant who conscientiously voted against the Government at all elections laid a rough hand on M. Tartine's collar, so that the unfortunate functionary was fain to yell out that his friend, M. Bravachon, the deputy, there present, would bear witness that he was the Prefect of Singebourg; but M. Bravachon, not wishing to have his incognito unveiled, had prudently decamped, displaying on this occasion that lack of civic courage which is the common blemish of Frenchmen.

In despair, M. Tartine felt in his pockets for something that could establish his identity, but he had nothing save visiting cards, and here it was that he began to feel what the liberty of a Frenchman travelling about alone is worth. His cards were treated with scorn, and the gendarmes clapped the handcuffs on him. He shrieked and protested, but this was of no use; and, escorted by a crowd, who loudly and feelingly anathematized him or a ragamuffin, he was hurried off in the direction of the *mairie* to undergo a preliminary examination.

Luckily the mayor was at home—a red-nosed rustic, with wooden shoes, a soiled grey blouse, and a blue woollen nightcap. He was breakfasting, on a stool outside his door, off bread, garlic, and cider. Seeing the prisoner advance gesticulating, with the mounted gendarmes behind, he hastened indoors to gird himself with his tricoloured sash, and at the same time he halloed across the road to the village schoolmaster to come and act as secretary and take down the depositions. This had the effect of bringing out all the schoolboys on the master's heels; and the public

tumult being thus considerably enhanced, M. Tartine was almost inaudible, as he returned answers to the following queries: "First and foremost, where is your passport?" growled the mayor, who liked to browbeat well-dressed delinquents.

"I haven't one, but I am a prefect," answered M. Tartine.

"I don't care who you are—if you have no passport you are contravening the law, and I shall detain you," said the mayor; "and now, what is your name?"

"What is the use of my telling you if you will not believe me!" exclaimed M. Tartine in disgust.

The mayor seemed puzzled at this, but the interrogatory proceeded, and M. Tartine's answers were deemed so unsatisfactory that he was about to be sent back to Dieppe on a warrant of committal, when abruptly a *deus ex machina* arose in the person of M. Mistifi, who, breathless and perspiring, clove his way through the throng and fell on M. Tartine's neck, embracing him fervently. M. Mistifi had a passport, and he was so stout-hearted in answering for the prisoner, and declaring that the Minister of the Interior would be summoned from Dieppe in two hours to corroborate his assertions, that eventually M. Tartine was released. He felt inclined to shed tears of gratitude over the waistcoat of the friend who had thus so opportunely saved him; but what would he have said had he been informed that it was none other than the traitor Mistifi who had brought this adventure upon his head?

Yes, indeed, for it was M. Mistifi who, having ascertained that M. Tartine had been seen departing towards the Tréport diligence, had sent per commissionaire to the gendarmerie station this anonymous note:—"A friend of Government warns the gendarmerie that the notorious Anarchist, Hector Brûlot, having escaped from prison, left for Le Tréport by this morning's coach. He goes by the name of Tartine, and is dressed as follows, &c." No; M. Tartine had no suspicions of this hoax, and has none to this day. It was in a sincere spirit of thankfulness and remorse that he linked his arm in that of the comrade whom he had so unhandsonely deserted, and proposed to him that they should both

go and revive themselves after their emotion by breakfasting at M. Bravachon's.

V.—M. BRAVACHON, DEPUTY.

MM. TARTINE and Mistifi repaired to M. Bravachon's house, and were received with open arms. It detracted nothing from the pleasantness of the meeting that the deputy had just abandoned M. Tartine to the possibility of imprisonment, for M. Bravachon was one of those mortals who can smooth away all unpleasantness by a few cheerful words. He owed much of his success in life to this merit. He could talk by the hour, and when he had finished you retained no recollection of anything he had said; but the general effect was as of a *douche* of tepid water, and one felt refreshed by it.

He took the two friends over what he termed his "estate"—a property of twenty acres or so—and alluded frequently to his "château"—a brick tenement, scarcely ten years old. He had a flock of sheep, a dozen cows, a poultry yard, two pointers and a setter, whom he styled "my pack," a piece of ornamental water, whence a few tench tasting of mud were occasionally extracted for the dinner-table, and a clump of trees covering half an acre, which was, of course, termed "a wood," and where six brace of pheasants and two of hares were believed to be disporting themselves. All these possessions suggested straitened circumstances in the present, but an ambition to soar higher in the future. Thus two masons and a boy were at work erecting a green-house, which was some day or other to rear forced fruit, and in another place a pair of plumbers were languidly laying down leaden pipes, which were to feed a fountain that decorated a patch of lawn.

It was evident that M. Bravachon took pride in his estate, and sought continually to add to its attractions; but he was also animated by the ambition very prevalent among French proprietors of making his property supply him with all the neces-

series of life, including money. He sold his eggs, fruit, vegetables, and milk. He wore socks knitted from the wool of his own flocks, and treated his guests to a breakfast of things all grown or killed on his estate. Even the wine, the tartest that MM. Tartine and Mistifi had ever tasted, had been pressed out of a vine that flourished on the border of the property, and was decorated with the title of "Clos Bravachon."

Unfortunately, M. Bravachon, like all men who are animated by good ideas tending to their own behoof or that of their fellows, had to contend with a spirited opposition, personified by his wife, who hated the country, and would have had her husband sell every stick and stone he possessed to live in Paris during the winter and spring, and to gad about to watering-places during the summer and autumn. This lady, dressed in the height of next year's fashions, flowed on to the lawn just before the breakfast-bell rang, and immediately poured into the ears of MM. Tartine and Mistifi the recital of her trials as a landowner's spouse.

She had no liking for bees, and the mere sight of the animals who furnish hams and bacon was abhorrent to her. Her country house was redolent of curious odours impossible to endure—smell of stables, cows, fermenting apples for the cider-tank, sample beetroots, damp wool, rotting straw, field manure, poultry, and unsavoury peasants. She was awakened in the small hours by furious cock-crowing, and again towards dawn by the horrible squeals of pigs being killed, by the grating of cart-wheels, the foolish fussing of hens who had laid eggs, the distracted lowings of cows who desired to be milked, and by the barking of the "pack," who, after yelping all through the night at imaginary burglars, saluted the rising sun by giving tongue louder than ever. Nor was there any set-off against these tribulations. Not an hour passed without some tatterdemalion ringing at the gate for a dinner, and not a week went by without some village woman being confined or some lad breaking a limb, which necessitated help in the way of linen, jellies, or money.

"And there is no refusing to give!" exclaimed Madame Bravachon distractedly; "the fact of Monsieur's being a deputy seems to make him the slave of everybody. When we are generous we get little thanks, for we are supposed to be merely doing our duty; if we refuse to disburse we are threatened with being voted against. Because Monsieur receives twenty-five francs a day, every man and woman in the province appears to think that they have a vested interest in our income. Ah! Monsieur Mistifi, I see you sympathise with these troubles to which Monsieur Bravachon is so callous!"

"I entirely sympathise," answered M. Mistifi, who in effect had been listening with a keen pleasure to the lady's raid upon country enjoyments. "Of all the hoaxes ever invented to delude the simple these so-called rural joys are the greatest. Give me town life, and let all the rustic spots of the globe be crushed into cinders by a comet as soon as you please. But why does not Monsieur Bravachon do like my friend Tartine, and obtain a prefecture? You could sell your lands, and with your private fortune and official salary live like small kings in a city like Singebourg."

"Ah! why, indeed?" echoed Madame Bravachon. "You hear what Monsieur Mistifi says, Ludovic; I am not the only person who thinks poorly of this degrading and annoying country existence."

M. Bravachon had been lowering his ears during his wife's denunciations, but he pricked them up when directly interpellated, and answered mildly enough that he had his family to consider, and that he regarded the career of a deputy as more profitable than that of a State servant. There was a chorus of protests, for even M. Tartine thought himself better off than a legislator who is obliged to run to and fro between Paris and the country, and who is followed everywhere by swarms of mendicants.

But M. Bravachon stuck to his point; and, gently cracking a walnut (grown on his own estate), began by remarking that he had

no more than a ten-sou piece when he started in life. His wife frowned. "Yes, a ten-sou piece," repeated M. Bravachon philosophically, "but my industry and a certain talent for getting the better of other men in business negotiations assisted me to make my fortune. Unluckily my relations had not enriched themselves with me, and, as they were both numerous and hungry, I had to reflect on the best means of helping them at little cost. You think, perhaps, I could have declined helping them?—that is a mistake, for family ties are so strong with us Frenchmen that they cannot be severed to allow of a man who has reached the top of the ladder leaving all his relatives at the bottom. Up you go all together, or those at the foot of the ladder make a noise and fling stones at you. There was a Minister who once refused to lend some money to a maiden aunt, whom he despised. What did she forthwith do but set up a cheap eating-house, over the front of which was painted 'kept by the aunt of the Minister of Justice'? Another Minister having cut a spendthrift brother adrift, the latter came to the ministerial office to beg a situation as messenger; and there is no disguising the fact that this kind of thing weighs upon the credit of a man. Briefly then, I had to help my relations, and I did so. You would hardly believe that I have never taken part in a division at the Chamber without getting the price of my vote, though I am not the sort of man whom any one would venture to bribe."

"One can tell that by your face," remarked M. Mistifi, civilly.

"Yes, bribery is one thing, but picking up a good thing whenever one can is another and very different," proceeded M. Bravachon, quietly. "My real creed is that nothing much matters; that one party is as good as another, and that all are bad alike. This being so, I should have seldom voted at all had I consulted my own tastes, but when Ministers pressed on I dropped white tickets into the voting-box to oblige them, and they, to mark their sense of my courtesy, gave me whatever trifles I chose to ask for on the spur of the moment. It is thus that one after another of my cousins and nephews has been provided for, and, as

you may suppose, I did not neglect myself in the distribution, for more than one financial company I could mention has received Government contracts or guarantees solely because I was principal shareholder. But enough on this subject. I have only this to add, that I love country life no better than the rest of you ; but I keep up my estate because my position as deputy—with which I would not part for any sum you could name—is dependent on it."

M. Bravachon finished his glass of tart wine and slightly winked ; Madame Bravachon frowned anew, and fanned herself precipitately ; M. Mistifi laughed. As for M. Tartine, he ceased to wonder at the hot zeal with which candidates contested the six parliamentary seats in his department of Singebourg. He was even half converted to the view that if he changed his prefecture for a deputyship he should be making no bad bargain.

VI.—THE MAN WITH THE LEATHER GAITERS.

"SOME foreign poet has tumbled upon a fine thought," observed M. Victor Mistifi. "He has speculated on the number of unknown Napoléons and Corneilles a village churchyard might contain. I was put in mind of it by seeing that man there with the leather gaiters—what a head ! and how evidently that arched brow was designed by Nature as the seat of noble thoughts !"

"You are always discovering great heads with nothing in them," grumbled M. Tartine ; "pray let this man alone."

M. Mistifi was a little nettled. He had been eyeing most admiringly the man with the noble head and leather gaiters, whom they had just passed ; and, not to be balked of a physiological study because of whim of M. Tartine's, he dropped behind and asked the stranger for a cigar light.

The two friends were faring towards St. Valéry-sur-Somme on foot. After taking leave of M. Bravachon, they had spent an eventful day at Le Tréport, which is not a remarkable place,

except for an interminable flight of mediæval steps leading to the high-perched church, which tourists visit once for the pleasure of climbing the steps and never go to again, because the pleasure of step-climbing is one whereof legs and imagination soon tire. St. Valéry had been warmly recommended to MM. Tartine and Mistifi; and as the weather was really charming they set out walking briskly, and for the first three hours or so, thanks to a few stoppages at wayside inns, found the journey not too tedious. But at the moment when M. Mistifi accosted the stranger, M. Tartine was beginning to reflect that the delights of excursionizing on "Nature's vehicles" have been unduly vaunted. Presently, however, M. Mistifi returned with the leather-gaitered man and introduced him by some Provençal name ending in *crac*.

"Monsieur, here, is a man of science," laughed the journalist. "He has just been explaining to me that our knapsacks are built on wrong principles, and he will procure us more comfortable ones."

M. Crac nodded, and M. Tartine could not help being struck by his imposing features. He had just the sort of head that Velasquez would have delighted to paint—large lustrous eyes deep set under sable eyebrows, a silky black beard trimmed to a point, and dark hair so closely cropped that it looked as though the man had pieces of black velvet glued to his head.

"You seem tired," he said to M. Tartine in a sweetly modulated voice and showing a perfect set of teeth. "I have a friend near here, and he will be enchanted to lend us a trap that you may finish your journey more speedily."

M. Tartine would have declined this offer, but M. Mistifi accepted it, and whispered to M. Tartine, "He is clearly a popular character in these parts, for he knows everybody. Let us stick to him; he may give us some amusement."

The man with the leather gaiters was marching in front. He reached a five-barred gate, climbed over it, and disappeared in the direction of a farm, shouting that he would be back in a second.

He was away 600 seconds, but when he returned it was with a dogcart drawn by a rat-tailed roan, which he pronounced the best trotter in Normandy. So much affability called for grateful acknowledgments, which were not withheld, but M. Crac mildly deprecated any thanks. His heart was in his hand; he loved to render service, and it was a treat to him to meet with gentlemen so witty and distinguished as the two before him. All the way to St. Valéry he talked in this strain, chequering his compliments with casual remarks on politics, arts, science, literature, and all other topics calculated to put men asunder or bring them together, according to the mood of the conversers.

St. Valéry was reached towards eight—that is, rather more than two hours after the table d'hôte at the hotel was over; and here is the time for observing that nothing can well exceed the dreariness of a French country hotel when one enters it after dusk. There is no warmth, no common room, and nothing to eat at unorthodox hours. The kitchen stoves are all extinguished, and the *chef*, his day's labours done, has taken off his paper cap and sits somewhere reading a Radical newspaper. He is not to be disturbed, and it would be no use to disturb him, for his larder is nearly empty. Of the big joints and pies which adorn English hotel sideboards not a sign here; there is, indeed, on a shelf the remnant of a *filet au madère* which was served at dinner, but the *chef* wants that piece of *filet* to make mince-cat balls with for to-morrow's breakfast, and if it be taken from him his combinations for the breakfast menu will be put out of order—a consummation not to be thought of. In time the travellers learn that by going into the hotel café they may get a cup of chocolate and some sweet biscuits, after which they may go to bed without fires, for it is too late to send the servant across the stable-yard to fetch baskets of wood.

M. Crac is disgusted; but it luckily occurs to him that he knows a fisherman in the main street who lets lodgings, and will be happy to oblige any friends of his for a day or two, and also to supply them with a good supper. Saying this, he drags off the

two friends, leaving the hotel-keeper to shrug his shoulders with the air of one who has had to cope with unreasonable demands and feels himself aggrieved. M. Crac's friend, the fisherman, proves as good as his patron's word. His rooms are neat, his wife bustles about obligingly to get the fires lighted; and as to the supper—three dozen oysters, fried soles, some cutlets, a game-pie, roquefort cheese, chablis, and bordeaux provide a repast fit for any one.

But why could not the hotel-keeper furnish all this, since the only magic of preparation consisted in sending out to shops still unclosed, and in lighting up a fire in half a minute with a tenuous' worth of charcoal? Ah! there is all the difference in the world between French people who are asked to do things as a matter of professional duty and French people who are amicably appealed to to render cheerful service. An hotel-keeper is a functionary, who must hedge himself in with rules lest he establish dangerous precedents; and as he gets no extra thanks for putting himself to trouble, he sends you about your business. The fisherman's wife knew that her diligence, cookery, and politeness would all be extolled by her guests, and she would have raced about the town all through the small hours.

*Of course M. Crac took his share of the supper, but he did not stay the night. He departed saying he would call in the morning with two improved knapsacks he had promised, and help his friends to make arrangements for their day's pleasure. He supposed they would like to go and shoot gulls over the bay of St. Valéry at low water, and afterwards dine at Le Crotoy? Let them leave all that to him. He would provide boats, guns, dogs, a small boy to carry the spoil, and everything else needful.

Le Crotoy is a sea-bathing village opposite St. Valéry, on the other side of the mouth of the Somme. At low water the intervening space of sand is dry, and tourists are to be seen there firing into the air at gulls which keep cautiously out of range. A point that must be kept in view is not to remain on the sands past the hour announced for the rising of the tide, for the tide comes in

with astonishing rapidity. Sportsmen generally regulate their movements by the passage of the fisher-girls, who flit by in bare-legged flocks, carrying their fish on their heads or backs in big baskets, from one town to the other.

One would be glad to romance a little about these fisher-girls; but they are for the most part hideous, raw-boned, tow-haired, hoarse-voiced, and too apt to regale the passing stranger with chaff as salt as the water in which their red feet plash.

MM. Tartine and Mistifi came in for a fine volley of such chaff. Having been out two hours without so much as sighting a bird, they thought they could make up for lost time by joking a little with the fisher-girls, with whom they commenced intercourse by an offer of their brandy flasks. The brandy was accepted; but when M. Mistifi, presuming on his knowledge of stage *argot*, ventured to crack an epigram, the maidens closed round the pair in a cackling circle, and let fly a shower of jocular personalities such as would have left them both prostrate, had not M. Crac intervened by firing off in his turn a broadside of language such as has never been printed.

The attainments of this mysterious man seemed to be universal. He used his tongue as deftly as his knife and fork or his gun (for he was within an ace of bagging some fowl, name unknown, which crossed his barrel), and he sent all the fisher-girls away yelping. Unfortunately, in this exploit he lost time, and vanity prompted him to fancy that if the fisher-girls set off running so fast it was in order to get out of reach of his keen shafts. The mistake might have cost him dear, for they only ran so as not to be behind-hand with the tide; and M. Crac, as he was in the very act of laughing at their flight, was suddenly startled by that ominous washing noise which betokens the approach of the waves.

It is inconceivable how swiftly the waters advance at such moments. The pools on the sand seem to fill in an instant; the star-fish, jelly-fish, cockles, and seaweeds which had but a minute before delighted the eye, disappear as though by magic; the sand becomes sloppy and recedes from the foot like a liquid paste;

and, to crown all, the shore, which one would have sworn to be but a hundred yards distant, turns out to be a mile off at the least.

"Quick ! we must run for it ; throw away your guns !" shouted M. Crac, and away they did run like rabbits, though M. Crac kept his gun, for nothing seemed to encumber his agile legs. He ran the fastest of the three—so fast indeed that he was a good fifty metres ahead of his companions when he stumbled first on the shore after wading through the last six yards knee-deep in water. M. Mistifi was a bad second, and he had water up to his waist ; but when M. Tartine was looked for he was seen floundering almost out of sight, with nothing visible of him except his head, which bobbed up and down like a float.

For a moment it was thought that he would be able to swim his way successfully, but soon his friends perceived that he was exhausted, and then for a few minutes it became doubtful whether he would be saved at all. However, a boat was fortunately at hand, and, after the inevitable delays, it was found possible to reach M. Tartine, and fish him out with a boat-hook just as he was sinking. His consciousness was half gone. In the boat he fainted altogether ; and the upshot of this day's sport was that he had to be carried back to his lodgings, put to bed between warm blankets, and dosed with hot rum and water.

Here it was that the solicitude of the man in the leather gaiters once more revealed itself. It was he who fetched the doctor (a friend of his), ran to the chemist's, purchased the rum, and insisted on the two friends accepting each a cork life-belt to guard them against such accidents in the future. All this amazingly touched M. Mistifi, and when M. Crac was about to take leave of him for the night he thanked him calorously with a grasp of the hand. But M. Crac repeated that thanks were needless—"only," added he, "as my business will call me back to Paris to-morrow we shall probably not see one another again ; so we had best settle."

"Settle ! oh, of course," echoed M. Mistifi ; but saying this he slightly winced on being confronted with a bill in which all the

services rendered by M. Crac—the dogcart, dinner, guns, boats, knapsacks, life-belts, &c.—were charged at about twice the amount which the friends would have had to pay had they managed for themselves.

“But am I to pay all this money to you?” asked M. Mistifi, surprised.

“Yes, please,” answered the man with the leather gaiters mildly. “You see I am a commission agent, and I was down about here for my annual holiday; but I never lose my time, and when I can combine business with pleasure I do so.”

“Oh, I see,” exclaimed M. Mistifi, admiringly, “but there is one thing you have overlooked in this bill; you have not charged us with the pleasure of your company.”

“I will give that into the bargain,” replied M. Crac, modestly; “but I’ll tell you what: should your friend unhappily die of this business—which heaven forbid!--you would much oblige me by having him buried by the Such-and-such Funeral Company. It will do the thing better than any of the others, and pay me a small commission.”

M. Mistifi paid the bill in silence. He had found more than his match.

THE END.

